

INSPECTION REPORT

Adult College for Rural East Sussex

05 May 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. The Adult College for Rural East Sussex (ACRES) was established in August 2005. It was formed from a consortium of seven community colleges in East Sussex, to provide co-ordinated provision of adult and community learning in the area. The seven community colleges cover rural East Sussex and are in Crowborough, Hailsham, Heathfield, Ringmer, Robertsbridge, Uckfield and Wadhurst. The managing board of ACRES consists of the principals of the seven community colleges and a representative of East Sussex County Council. The executive manager of ACRES reports to the board.

2. The executive manager is supported by a management team which includes a business manager, three centre managers and a co-ordinator of provision for adults with learning difficulties and/or disabilities who is responsible for subcontracted provision on these courses. A team of centre co-ordinators provides administrative support for the provision. In addition, there is a skills for life manager and a part-time co-ordinator for adults with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, responsible for tutor support and quality assurance. Skills for life is the government's strategy on training in literacy, numeracy and the use of language. ACRES employs 192 part-time tutors. Twenty-three of the tutors were appointed in September 2005, the rest being previously employed by the community colleges.

3. Provision at ACRES is funded by Sussex Learning and Skills Council through a contract with the external institutions within the consortium. In addition to this directly funded provision, ACRES is a subcontractor of East Sussex County Council for provision in independent living and leisure skills and of Sussex Downs College for accredited provision in a number of areas of learning and some non-accredited literacy, numeracy and language provision.

4. At the time of inspection, ACRES had 2,183 learners enrolled in 12 of the 15 areas of learning. Of this total, 1,859 learners were enrolled on courses in the four areas of learning graded at inspection. Of the total number of learners, 379 were in provision subcontracted by East Sussex County Council and 201 were in provision subcontracted by Sussex Downs College.

OVERALL EFFECTIVENESS

Grade 4

5. **The overall effectiveness of the provision is inadequate.** ACRES's leadership and management are inadequate, as are its approach to equality of opportunity and the arrangements for quality improvement. Provision is satisfactory in arts, media and publishing, but inadequate in leisure, travel and tourism, in languages, literature and culture and in preparation for life and work.

6. **The inspection team had some confidence in the reliability of the self-assessment process.** The self-assessment for 2004-05 was carried out before the formation of ACRES. The process was carried out in the seven community colleges and the evidence was collated to produce an overall self-assessment report for ACRES. The evidence available at

each community college was not consistent and there was considerable variation in the detail available. The process was carried out with integrity, however, and showed a good understanding of the Common Inspection Framework. The final self-assessment report provided a reasonably accurate overview of the provision and an appropriate development plan was produced. ACRES is aware of the shortfalls of the process, and considerable efforts have been made to improve consistency across the organisation. ACRES intends to have a consistent and coherent evidence base for future self-assessment.

7. The provider has demonstrated that it has sufficient capacity to make improvements.

ACRES has made good progress in developing appropriate policies and procedures to improve the quality of provision. It is in the process of establishing its approach to quality improvement. Arrangements for the observation of teaching and learning are appropriate, but have yet to be fully implemented. There is a clear strategic vision of what needs to be achieved and how this will be carried out. A key element of this is the acknowledgement of the need to improve curriculum management. The current difficulties in implementing procedures consistently and effectively reflect the fact that ACRES has been in operation for less than a year.

KEY CHALLENGES FOR ADULT COLLEGE FOR RURAL EAST SUSSEX:

- improve curriculum management and development
- further implement and monitor quality improvement
- improve teaching and learning
- improve initial assessment and progress monitoring
- further promote and celebrate learning
- develop partnerships to widen participation and improve progression routes
- promote equality of opportunity effectively
- continue to improve communication with, and involvement of, staff
- improve the collection and use of data

GRADES

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

Grades awarded at inspection

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

Leisure, travel and tourism			4
Contributory areas:	Number of learners	Contributory grade	
<i>Sport, leisure and recreation</i>		4	
Adult and community learning	361	4	

Arts, media and publishing			3
Contributory areas:	Number of learners	Contributory grade	
<i>Dance</i>			
Adult and community learning	48	3	
<i>Fine arts</i>			
Adult and community learning	167	3	
<i>Crafts</i>			
Adult and community learning	91	3	
<i>Media and communication</i>			
Adult and community learning	56	3	

Languages, literature and culture			4
Contributory areas:	Number of learners	Contributory grade	
<i>Language, literature and culture of the British Isles</i>			
Adult and community learning	30	4	
<i>Other languages, literature and culture</i>			
Adult and community learning	317	4	

Preparation for life and work		4
Contributory areas:	Number of learners	Contributory grade
Literacy Adult and community learning	71	4
Numeracy Adult and community learning	42	4
ESOL Adult and community learning	125	4
Literacy and numeracy Adult and community learning	7	4
Independent living and leisure skills Adult and community learning	544	4

ABOUT THE INSPECTION

8. The inspection took place between 2 and 5 May 2006. The inspectors inspected and graded leadership and management, including equality of opportunity and quality improvement. They also inspected and graded provision in leisure, travel and tourism, in arts, media and publishing, in languages, literature and culture and in preparation for life and work. Within preparation for life and work, provision in literacy and numeracy and in independent living and leisure skills was reported on separately. The other areas of learning offered by ACRES were not graded as too few courses were running during the inspection period.

Number of inspectors	11
Number of inspection days	44
Number of learners interviewed	182
Number of staff interviewed	78
Number of locations/sites/learning centres visited	47
Number of partners/external agencies interviewed	8

KEY FINDINGS

Achievements and standards

9. Some learners achieve good standards. **Learners in leisure, travel and tourism gain good health and social benefits.** Classes aimed at older learners focus well on fitness, maintenance of mobility and balance. Learners state that they visit the doctor and chiropractor less often than before they began to attend the classes. **Many learners on arts, media and publishing programmes develop good skills,** in, for example, star patchwork, a technique which requires high levels of skill, and upholstery skills which include refurbishment of antique chairs and pleated curtain making.

10. **Pass rates in numeracy tests are high**, although the number of learners who have taken tests is low. **Learners in literacy and numeracy gain increased confidence and self-esteem.** They particularly enjoy work that relates to real-life situations, confidently using metric measurements in recipes and working out how much wallpaper is required to decorate a room in their home.

11. Retention rates are satisfactory. The attainment and standards reached by most learners are satisfactory. Achievement rates in accredited provision in languages and in preparation for life and work are generally satisfactory. Achievement on non-accredited provision is generally not rigorously identified or monitored.

12. **Attendance is poor in literacy and numeracy classes.** For example, two classes in literacy had attendance levels of 37 per cent and 57 per cent. In numeracy, the lowest attendance figure was 68 per cent. In both areas, achievement levels have been affected. Attendance is satisfactory in other curriculum areas. **Punctuality is poor in independent living and leisure skills classes.** In two classes observed during inspection, learners arrived 40 minutes late and 20 minutes late respectively.

The quality of provision

Grades given to learning sessions

	Grade 1	Grade 2	Grade 3	Grade 4	Total
Leisure, travel and tourism	1	2	5	2	10
Arts, media and publishing	0	5	4	0	9
Languages, literature and culture	0	2	9	2	13
Preparation for life and work	0	5	10	5	20
Total	1	14	28	9	52

13. **In sport, leisure and recreation, performance analysis and individual coaching are good in most sessions.** Tutors move effectively around the group, observe each learner's performance and offer appropriate advice on correct posture and technique. Learners make immediate improvements and receive positive reinforcement to help them to maintain safe and proper form.

14. **Inspectors identified good teaching in art workshops.** In the more successful sessions, lessons are well planned and include a variety of activities to sustain the interest of learners. In one class, learners were challenged to move out of their comfort zone and explore and experiment with new media.

15. **Tutors in arts, media and publishing are particularly well qualified and experienced.** A high percentage are practising artists or work in related industries. In other areas of learning, tutors are generally appropriately qualified.

16. **The achievement of learners in independent living and leisure skills provision is celebrated well.** An annual event is planned and organised by the learners. Centre awards evenings are held as well as an art exhibition open to the public.

17. Most accommodation is satisfactory. Some classrooms are well equipped. However, the equipment in other classrooms does not work. Some tutors, in languages and literacy and numeracy, for example, have not been trained to use equipment such as interactive

whiteboards.

18. Much teaching is satisfactory, with little good or outstanding teaching identified during inspection. For example, in languages, tutors rely heavily on textbooks and plan courses around units of these books. Although most tutors have the target language as their first language, most do not use the language sufficiently during sessions.

19. **In literacy and numeracy, an insufficient range of teaching and learning methods is used.** Some tutors rely too heavily on worksheets. There is little use of information learning technology (ILT) and visual aids are not well used.

20. **Much of the teaching in independent living and leisure skills is inadequate.** Much teaching is dull and uninspiring. Learners are given mundane tasks to complete. Teaching is often pitched at a level below the competence of the learners.

21. **Initial assessment is not routinely or effectively carried out.** In sport, leisure and recreation this weakness extended to insufficient identification of individual health needs as well as learners' skills. In literacy and numeracy, initial assessment arrangements are inadequate, and some courses do not carry out initial assessment. The lack of initial assessment was identified in all curriculum areas, especially in non-accredited provision. ACRES does not have a process to identify the literacy, numeracy and language support needs of its learners.

22. **In all curriculum areas, insufficient attention is paid to identifying individual learning goals.** Individual learning plans are rarely used and progress monitoring is generally weak. Insufficient attention to each learner and their learning needs was generally identified as a key weakness. In arts, media and publishing, there is insufficient formal assessment and recording of progress.

23. **Provision is not sufficiently well planned.** The range of provision in sport, leisure and recreation is too narrow, with over half of the classes being in yoga. ACRES has not carried out research to identify gaps in provision, and there are no partnerships with clubs or other organisations to provide progression opportunities. In arts, media and publishing, course levels are not clearly described. Very few advanced classes are offered. Pathways for progression are not clear. Provision in independent living and leisure skills does not widen participation sufficiently or provide adequate progression opportunities. However, the range of provision is adequate in languages and in literacy and numeracy.

Leadership and management

24. **Good strategic leadership of organisational change has enabled ACRES to develop clear priorities.** A coherent and comprehensive strategy for change is under way. It is too early for this to have had sufficient effect on the quality of provision.

25. **ACRES has made good progress in developing an appropriate quality improvement framework.** This includes appropriate arrangements for observation of teaching and learning. However, these are not yet fully implemented and established.

26. Internal verification arrangements are appropriate. Little provision at ACRES is subject to internal verification, but the verification that takes place meets the awarding bodies'

requirements.

27. Weak curriculum management is highlighted as a weakness throughout the provision. In preparation for life and work, curriculum specialists have been appointed to manage the provision. Although the provision is not yet satisfactory, improvements have been made and further improvements are planned. However, **in literacy and numeracy, there is insufficient recognition and sharing of good practice.**

28. The use of data to support improvement is weak. ACRES has made good progress in developing appropriate data recording and analysis tools. However, recorded data is not always accurate. Insufficient information is available to effectively monitor course performance and inform improvements.

29. The monitoring of provision is inadequate. ACRES has developed a suitable range of documents, but these documents are not used consistently or efficiently. Too few observations of teaching and learning have been carried out. In independent living and leisure skills, these inadequate arrangements are identified as a weakness. In most curriculum areas these are key aspects of the broader weakness in curriculum management.

30. In sport, leisure and recreation, insufficient attention is paid to learners' health and safety. Sport-specific risk assessments are not carried out. A number of cases of unsafe teaching and learning environments were identified during inspection.

31. Staff and learners have a poor awareness of equality and diversity. Three curriculum reports identify this as a weakness of the provision. A learners' handbook is distributed to learners, apart from those on independent living and leisure skills courses. Apart from this, there is no coverage of equality of opportunity with learners. There is no regular programme of staff training on equality and diversity matters. ACRES does not market and publicise its provision effectively to reach under-represented groups.

Leadership and management

Strengths

- good strategic leadership of organisational change
- good progress in developing an appropriate quality improvement framework

Weaknesses

- weak curriculum management
- weak use of data to support improvement
- inadequate monitoring of provision
- insufficient promotion of equality of opportunity among staff and learners

Leisure, travel and tourism

Sport, leisure and recreation

Strengths

- good health and social benefits for learners
- good performance analysis and individual coaching in most sessions

Weaknesses

- insufficient attention to individual learners' needs
- narrow range of provision
- weak curriculum management
- insufficient attention to learners' health and safety
- poor awareness of equality and diversity

Arts, media and publishing

Strengths

- good skills development for many learners
- good teaching in art workshops
- particularly well-qualified and experienced tutors

Weaknesses

- insufficient formal assessment and recording of progress
- poor planning of provision to meet learners' needs
- weak curriculum management

Languages, literature and culture

Strengths

- no significant strengths identified

Weaknesses

- insufficient attention to learners' individual needs
- insufficiently developed curriculum management

Preparation for life and work

Literacy and numeracy

Strengths

- high pass rates for numeracy tests
- good development of learners' confidence and self-esteem

Weaknesses

- poor attendance
- inadequate initial assessment arrangements
- insufficient range of teaching and learning methods to meet individual needs
- insufficient recognition and sharing of good practice
- poor awareness of equality of opportunity

Independent living and leisure skills

Strengths

- good celebration of learners' achievement

Weaknesses

- poor punctuality
- insufficient attention to individual learning needs
- much inadequate teaching
- insufficient planning of provision to widen participation and provide progression opportunities
- inadequate arrangements to improve the quality of teaching and learning
- poor equality of opportunity awareness, training and promotion

WHAT LEARNERS LIKE ABOUT ADULT COLLEGE FOR RURAL EAST SUSSEX:

- 'I'm doing something that I have always wanted to do'
- 'as an older person, I often need reminding to learn new skills. My tutor does this really well'
- the individual and very supportive teaching
- 'this is the best exercise I get all week, and it's great fun'
- 'the course is socially and therapeutically fantastic!'
- 'it's not like school'

WHAT LEARNERS THINK ADULT COLLEGE FOR RURAL EAST SUSSEX COULD IMPROVE:

- provision of classes near to where learners live
- the clarity of information on the pricing and length of courses
- 'letting me know if my class will run in September'
- resources - making sure that they are available and working
- the amount of paperwork

DETAILED INSPECTION FINDINGS

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

Grade 4

Strengths

- good strategic leadership of organisational change
- good progress in developing an appropriate quality improvement framework

Weaknesses

- weak curriculum management
- weak use of data to support improvement
- inadequate monitoring of provision
- insufficient promotion of equality of opportunity among staff and learners

32. ACRES has benefited from good strategic leadership of organisational change. The executive manager has been in post since February 2005, and has steered the development of ACRES. The decision to appoint an external candidate to this post was taken by the board in acknowledgement of the need to provide strong leadership founded upon extensive experience of leading adult and community learning provision. The expertise brought to the role has been instrumental in planning and introducing appropriate organisational change. A coherent and comprehensive strategy for organisational change is under way. This includes the introduction of consistent and coherent operational management, systematic use of management information, an overall quality improvement framework and a framework for the observation of teaching and learning. In addition, ACRES has made progress in planning the curriculum offer across the provision for the first time and is producing one course brochure to cover all provision. To date, separate brochures have been circulated by each community college. Financial constraints necessitate further restructuring to take place for the beginning of the next academic year. Plans for this restructuring are well in hand. They will rationalise the management and administrative structure further and will strengthen curriculum management. However, although the strategic leadership is good, effective organisational change has not yet been fully established and few improvements to the quality of provision are apparent.

33. Internal communication is satisfactory overall. The management team meets every two weeks and a wider group, which includes the centre co-ordinators, meets twice a term. These meetings have been an effective mechanism for monitoring and improving consistency of practice between the centres. Communication with staff as a whole is less successful. Most tutors were employed by the community colleges before ACRES began. Many have little contact with the organisation, apart from informal contact with a centre co-ordinator if they teach in one of the community centres. Attendance at meetings is poor. Not all tutors have access to e-mail. A tutors' update is put in registers or sent in the post to tutors to inform them of developments. To date, these have been produced and circulated approximately every three months. However, many tutors have little understanding of the changes taking place and of the need to update and improve their practice in line with other adult and community provision.

34. Financial and resource management is satisfactory. Regular financial reports are available, broken down into clear and appropriate budget lines. ACRES keeps a close watch on financial matters and works within its budget. Accommodation is generally satisfactory, as are teaching and learning resources. Over 90 per cent of tutors have an appropriate teaching qualification. Approximately 70 per cent of tutors have appropriate subject qualifications or significant professional experience.

35. Staff development and training is seen as a priority, although resources for this are limited. ACRES has specifically identified recognising and recording progress and achievement in non-accredited learning as a high priority within its development plan and has held three training events for tutors. However, attendance at these has been poor, with only 34 of the 192 tutors attending. The inspectors found that tutors' understanding of recognising and recording progress and achievement in non-accredited learning is often poor and there are few examples of it being used effectively. ACRES is aware of this as a continuing area of weakness and is planning further training events.

36. ACRES does not carry out staff performance reviews at present, although regular appraisal is planned for managers. The identification of tutors' development needs relies upon the outcomes of lesson observations and class visits. To date, few lesson observations have taken place. Class visits have not been effective in improving the quality and consistency of teaching or related paperwork. There are no other arrangements to review the performance of tutors, many of whom work in isolation.

37. ACRES has well-established partnerships with the local authority and Sussex Downs College. The provision subcontracted by these providers is subject to their quality assurance arrangements. The Wealden Skills Centre, based in Uckfield, has recently been established in partnership with Sussex Downs College. This centre aims to widen participation and introduce programmes that are not currently available locally. Other partnership arrangements within the locality are not well developed. This has hindered ACRES's ability to widen participation and target under-represented groups.

38. Curriculum management is weak. This was identified as a key weakness in three of the curriculum areas inspected. In preparation for life and work there are curriculum co-ordinators in post, with responsibility for provision for literacy, numeracy and language for adults with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. These co-ordinators are having some effect, but as yet the provision is not of a satisfactory standard. Other areas of learning do not have an identified specialist curriculum co-ordinator. This has a significant effect on ACRES's ability to improve the quality of teaching and learning. Currently, most tutors do not receive any support from a curriculum specialist. ACRES is aware that this issue needs to be dealt with as a priority.

Equality of opportunity

Contributory grade 4

39. ACRES provides appropriate support for learners, for which responsibility has been allocated to one of the centre managers. Satisfactory financial support procedures are in place. Additional funding has been allocated to enable ACRES to offer reduced fees to learners who would not normally be eligible for fee remission. However, take-up has been low to date, and ACRES intends to promote this support provision more effectively next year. Learners are encouraged to declare learning difficulties and/or disabilities on their enrolment form and are offered the opportunity to discuss their needs by telephone.

Where possible, accessibility and specialist equipment needs are resolved before the course starts. Some sites used by ACRES are not accessible to those with restricted mobility. However, classes are moved to accessible sites if a problem is identified. Little action is taken to promote other aspects of support for learners. For example, there is no organisational strategy to identify and provide additional support for literacy, numeracy and language needs. The implementation of equality of opportunity is not currently identified as a priority throughout ACRES. However, there are plans to allocate responsibility for equality of opportunity within the new structure to be introduced in September 2006.

40. ACRES uses the local authority's policies with regard to staffing issues. It has its own equality and diversity policy which satisfies the requirements of the Race Relations (Amendment) Act 2000. However, the policy is largely a statement of intent and there is no strategy for implementation. ACRES has a learners' charter and a complaints procedure, which are included in the learners' handbook. A comments, compliments and complaints form is printed on the inside back cover of the handbook. However, although most learners are given a copy of the learners' handbook, the contents are not discussed at induction or later in the programme. ACRES acknowledges that the handbook is not written in a user-friendly format which is easily understood by all learners. For this reason, learners on independent living and leisure skills programmes are not given a copy of the handbook. There are plans to produce a more appropriate document. Insufficient attention is currently paid to ensuring that learners at ACRES are aware of equality of opportunity issues and how to resolve them.

41. ACRES has no mechanisms in place to monitor whether staff have an appropriate understanding of equality and diversity issues. There are no arrangements to ensure that staff promote equality of opportunity effectively to the learners. The tutors' handbook includes very little content relevant to these issues. Incidents of inappropriate use of language in teaching and learning sessions were observed during the inspection. Examples of the use of unsuitable teaching and learning materials further demonstrate a lack of awareness by tutors of equality of opportunity issues. Training for staff on equality of opportunity is not currently a priority at ACRES. However, the administrative staff have received training in information, advice and guidance which includes consideration of some equality and diversity issues.

42. To date, ACRES has done little to widen participation. Although it collects appropriate data, it does not use this to identify under-represented groups, set targets or monitor progress in widening participation. Some partnership work is beginning to have an effect on widening participation. For example, the Wealden Skills Centre will offer construction courses to women. Overall, ACRES does not market and publicise its provision effectively to reach under-represented groups. For example, materials are not available in languages other than English.

Quality improvement

Contributory grade 4

43. ACRES has made good progress in developing an appropriate framework for quality improvement. It has carried out good initial work in developing policies and procedures covering many aspects of the learners' experience. A quality framework document clearly sets out the organisation's objectives for quality improvement and, in many cases, details appropriate arrangements for their implementation. All tutors have received a well-written and largely comprehensive tutors' handbook which provides clear guidance and, in many cases, good background information. This includes an explanation of a tutor's role and

responsibilities, good guidance on preparing schemes of work, a first lesson checklist and copies of the recently developed course administration forms designed to be used across all centres. Many tutors view the tutors' handbook as a good reference document. They regard the unification of arrangements and documents across all centres as being a valuable outcome of the new organisation. ACRES's managers are aware, however, that these quality improvement arrangements are not yet consistently used or monitored.

44. Very little of the provision at ACRES is subject to internal verification. Where internal verification takes place, the arrangements are satisfactory and meet the requirements of the awarding bodies.

45. The self-assessment process is adequate. The self-assessment report, published in January 2005, was prepared before the formation of ACRES. It brings together self-assessments produced by the previously independent community centres, some of which have had little previous experience of the process. The quality of analysis is variable. Some area of learning reports are insufficiently critical. ACRES is clearly aware of the need to develop a more consistent and evaluative self-assessment report in the future. The current self-assessment report identifies many of the weaknesses identified by the inspection team. The curriculum self-assessment grades are generally higher than those given at inspection. The associated development plan has prioritised some of the key weaknesses identified in the self-assessment report. The plan was monitored and revised in March 2006. Appropriate progress is being made in dealing with some, but not all, of the priorities identified.

46. The use of data to support improvement is weak. ACRES has worked hard to develop data recording and analysis tools appropriate to the new organisation. A suitable range of data is collected. However, ACRES is still reliant upon a management information system which was developed by the local authority at a time before ACRES was formed. Some progress has been made in adapting the reports produced by the system to better suit the new organisation's needs. However, recorded retention data is not always accurate. In one case, centrally generated reports indicated that 18 learners were active on a course, whereas registers indicated that the correct figure was nine. Appropriate reports regarding income, expenditure and enrolments are available to managers. However, insufficient information is available to monitor course performance effectively and guide improvements. For example, while adequate retention information by centre can be generated, no overall data is available to monitor performance by curriculum area. Information on current learners was not readily available during the inspection. Target-setting is weak. For example, there are no targets set for retention and achievement rates. Judgements on the achievement of learners on non-accredited courses are made by tutors, but there are no consistent or reliable criteria as to how the judgement is made. The recording of learners' progress and achievement is inadequate on many courses. ACRES is aware of many of these weaknesses, and is planning to rectify them.

47. The monitoring of the provision is inadequate. ACRES has too few reliable arrangements to ensure that the quality of its provision is of a consistently high quality. The organisation has appropriately identified the observation of teaching and learning as a central quality improvement tool. Experienced tutors and the centre managers have developed and introduced a programme of graded classroom observations. Training in carrying out formal observations of teaching and learning has not been carried out. However, useful development and moderation meetings have been held. There have been

too few graded observations to date. Not all observations are conducted by curriculum specialists. At the time of the inspection, 30 out of a total of 192 tutors had received grade observations since November 2005. ACRES plans to observe and grade all tutors within a two-year period. Observation feedback reports do not consistently reflect an understanding by the observer of the specialist context of lessons.

48. ACRES has developed a suitable range of new documents to record aspects such as course information, lesson plans and schemes of work. These documents are not used consistently or efficiently, however. Inspectors found examples of incomplete registers, tutor-devised learning materials of varying quality in use in different centres, and inadequate risk assessment records. In one case, a tutor was maintaining virtually identical quality files at the three centres at which they worked. ACRES is aware of the need to rationalise its procedures further, and to minimise duplication and inconsistent practice.

AREAS OF LEARNING

Leisure, travel and tourism

Grade 4

Contributory areas:	Number of learners	Contributory grade
<i>Sport, leisure and recreation</i> Adult and community learning	361	4 4

49. Sport and leisure courses represent approximately 20 per cent of provision at ACRES, with 361 learners enrolled on 31 non-accredited courses. Seventy-nine per cent of the learners are women. Twenty-five per cent of learners are aged under 45, 24 per cent are aged 45 to 54, 26 per cent are aged between 54 and 65, and 25 per cent are aged 65 or over. Less than 1 per cent of learners are from minority ethnic groups and less than 1 per cent have declared a disability. ACRES offers sport and leisure courses ranging from body toning and badminton to tai chi and yoga. Fifty per cent of the courses are yoga courses. Specialist courses are available for learners over 60 years of age. Some progression opportunities are available in some areas, but most classes are mixed ability. Classes take place at 19 venues, including community colleges, youth centres, village halls and church halls. Courses are provided during the day and in the evenings. Most courses recruit termly and last for 10 weeks. There are 25 part-time tutors. The provision is managed by three centre managers.

Sport, leisure and recreation

Strengths

- good health and social benefits for learners
- good performance analysis and individual coaching in most sessions

Weaknesses

- insufficient attention to individual learners' needs
- narrow range of provision
- weak curriculum management
- insufficient attention to learners' health and safety
- poor awareness of equality and diversity

Achievement and standards

50. Learners enjoy good health and social benefits from attending courses. For many learners, participation in courses increases activity and mobility and promotes personal confidence. Learners are fully engaged and highly motivated. The benefits include increased stamina and strength, improvements to cardiovascular endurance and stress control and, in some sessions, reduction in joint pain. In some sessions, learners are also mentally stimulated by having to remember long and complex sequences of movements. The classes targeted toward elderly people focus well on fitness and maintenance of mobility and balance. Many older learners recognise the maintenance of their health and

fitness levels as a key benefit which slows down age-related deterioration. One learner aged over 70 stated that she is fitter now than she was 10 years ago. Another has attended a class to promote his rehabilitation following a heart attack. Another has used the class to help her to recover emotionally and socially from a bereavement. Other learners state that they have to visit the doctor and chiropractor less often than before they began to attend their course. Many learners who have met through courses meet socially and participate in other activities such as walking, badminton, tai chi and line dancing. One class has been developed specifically to meet the needs of its learners, combining a number of different techniques to produce a hybrid of dance, improvisation, exercise and aerobics.

51. Retention rates are satisfactory. Most learners complete their courses and some courses maintain 100 per cent retention rates.

The quality of provision

52. Tutors provide good individual performance analysis and coaching in most classes. In the better sessions, these benefits are supported by inspirational teaching from highly motivated and skilled tutors. In most classes, tutors move effectively around the group, observe individual learners' performance and offer appropriate advice on correct posture and technique. Tutors analyse individual performance and suggest improvements or alternatives with a good awareness of potential contraindications of exercises that learners should not perform. Learners make immediate improvements in the quality of their performance and receive positive reinforcement to help them to maintain safe and proper form.

53. Teaching and learning are satisfactory overall. Most tutors are appropriately qualified and show good knowledge and understanding of their discipline. Demonstrations by tutors are good and highlight key learning points. In the better sessions, classes are well planned, learners are challenged and tutors provide a high level of support to learners, with some effective differentiation and performance analysis leading to improved understanding and technique. In the weaker sessions, there is a lack of challenge for more able learners and insufficient attention is paid to joint safety and posture. In these sessions, good use of technique is not reinforced and poor technique is not corrected.

54. Insufficient attention is paid to the individual needs of learners. Initial assessment is not used effectively to identify and record learners' skills at the beginning of their course. Appropriate individual learning goals are not identified for all learners. Although learners identify their own learning goals, these are not used sufficiently by tutors. Tutors do not routinely plan lessons to meet the specific learning goals identified by individuals. Individual learning plans are not systematically used by all tutors. Most tutors have an appropriate knowledge of their learners' needs which they take into account during sessions, but this is not recorded in lesson plans. Insufficient attention is paid to the individual health needs of learners. ACRES has devised a health questionnaire which is used at the beginning of each course. It is inadequate, as it does not collect sufficient information to appropriately advise tutors on the specific needs of their learners. In particular, the medical information disclosed on the forms is too general. Tutors do not routinely use these documents or they use them in addition to their own. Many learners view the form filling as an unnecessary chore and do not understand the importance of this information. Some tutors have developed their own process for recording learners' progress. One tutor has a coloured chart that she completes after each session to record

learners' attainment. Another tutor asks the group for feedback at the end of each session, and makes notes on the reverse side of the lesson plan to provide a simple record of the session along with their evaluation of it.

55. The range of provision is narrow. Fifty per cent of the provision is yoga. There is no weekend provision and all classes stop at the end of the academic year. Many learners are keen to continue their skills development over the holiday periods. Tasters are not offered to encourage new learners into activities. Classes designated for new learners or improvers often end up recruiting learners with different levels of skill. Many learners have attended the same course for a number of years because there are insufficient progression opportunities. Research has not been carried out to identify gaps in provision or locations where there is a demand for sports courses. There are no partnerships with clubs or other organisations to provide progression opportunities or extension activities.

Leadership and management

56. The area of learning is poorly managed and not effectively led. Centre managers do not have an appropriate understanding of the area of learning. They cannot effectively monitor or develop the quality of the provision or the performance of tutors. Subject-specific development needs are not covered, and tutors take responsibility for their own professional development. A programme of meetings for internal staff development has not taken place to help tutors to become familiar with the new working arrangements at ACRES. Good practice is not systematically shared between tutors or centres. Communication between managers and tutors is poor. Most tutors report that they have not been visited by a manager this academic year. Tutors supply their own resources such as stereos, mats and blocks, to support their classes. Learners do not receive support for literacy and numeracy. Data is not used effectively to monitor or evaluate the quality of provision, make improvements or support planning. The process for the observation of teaching and learning is satisfactory, but very few observations have taken place. Only five of 25 tutors have been observed this year. Tutors do not understand the process. Of those who have been observed, the grading profile was too generous in comparison with observations carried out by inspectors. Course files are not consistently monitored by managers. Schemes of work and lesson plans are not moderated or reviewed. Some are very weak, and have insufficient content and detail. Information in course files varies in quality and quantity across centres. Some tutors use self-devised paperwork to record learners' progress or health assessments. Some of these are effective and quite appropriate, but often duplicate other materials. Many staff do not understand the necessity of completing paperwork and some do not maintain a register. The self-assessment process is not sufficiently critical. It has not identified some of the weaknesses identified during the inspection. Although it graded the area of learning as unsatisfactory, the evidence available was weak and missed some key issues. Tutors were not involved in the self-assessment process.

57. Insufficient attention is paid to the health and safety of learners. Sport-specific risk assessments have not been carried out to ensure that the venues are appropriate to meet the needs of the activities they are being used for. The accommodation assessments completed by administrators are inadequate to assure activities happen in appropriate venues. In some locations with larger classes, the space available is barely adequate for the needs of learners. In one class of 16 learners, with 18 on the register, there would have been insufficient space for the whole class as extra equipment had been stacked around the room. In other classes where movement is limited, the temperature of the learning

environment is not appropriate. A tutor and learners reported that they had brought in heaters from home to heat the classroom. In one centre, learners have to walk across a poolside area then through a store cupboard to access the classroom. In other classrooms there are issues around the cleanliness of floor surfaces and furniture and equipment being stacked without regard to the safety of learners. Electrical equipment is not routinely tested for safety. However, most of the venues used are suitable and meet the requirements of the course and the needs of the learners.

58. Learners have a poor awareness of equality of opportunity and its relevance to them as learners. The staff at ACRES have a poor understanding of equality and diversity issues. However, most are aware of the needs of the individuals in their classes. Tutors have not received any specific training in equality and diversity issues such as in the Race Relations (Amendment) Act 2000. Inappropriate terminology is used by some tutors. Targets are not set to increase participation by specific marginalised groups. However, centres have suitable access to sports classrooms for learners with restricted mobility.

Arts, media and publishing**Grade 3**

Contributory areas:	Number of learners	Contributory grade
Dance Adult and community learning	48	3
Fine arts Adult and community learning	167	3
Crafts Adult and community learning	91	3
Media and communication Adult and community learning	56	3

59. ACRES offers a variety of courses in arts, media and publishing. At the time of the inspection, 362 learners attended 36 courses in 13 venues. Most courses are offered at community colleges. Courses include a number of beginners' classes in art, craft and dance, and there are a small number of intermediate art workshops. Learners are able to take classes in art, watercolour and acrylic painting, botanical art, pottery, photography, patchwork and quilting, woodcarving, soft furnishings and upholstery, card-making, creative writing, belly dancing and general dance. Most courses are non-accredited, but there is a small amount of accredited provision in photography and two accredited art courses subcontracted by Sussex Downs College. Most courses last for either five or 10 weeks, with the exception of accredited courses run for 30 weeks. One per cent of learners are from minority ethnic groups, and 18 per cent are men. There are 36 tutors in this area of learning. The programme is co-ordinated by three centre managers.

Strengths

- good skills development for many learners
- good teaching in art workshops
- particularly well-qualified and experienced tutors

Weaknesses

- insufficient formal assessment and recording of progress
- poor planning of provision to meet learners' needs
- weak curriculum management

Achievement and standards

60. Many learners display good skills development. Learners gain a variety of skills in upholstery, painting and drawing and photography. For example, in a lesson in watercolour painting, all learners, including the most experienced, acquire new skills. Learners in art classes develop good visual awareness and make confident, lively and well-observed still life paintings. Some work is of a high standard, including a striking still life produced by using white acrylic on a black charcoal base. Good technical competence is developed in star patchwork, a technique which requires high levels of skill. In upholstery, a good range of skills is demonstrated, such as refurbishment of antique chairs and pleated curtain making. In photography there is good development of traditional

processing skills. In belly dancing, a range of choreographed movements have been learnt and used in preparation of a dance performance.

61. Retention rates are generally satisfactory, but are low on some accredited courses. Attendance during the inspection was 75 per cent.

The quality of provision

62. Good teaching in art workshops was observed during inspection. In the more successful sessions, lessons are well planned and include a variety of activities to sustain the interest of learners. In a lesson on patchwork, a quiz was used effectively, together with examples of patchwork quilting, to confirm learners' knowledge and understanding of colour terminology. In one art workshop, there is a very good emphasis on observational skills, individual support and verbal feedback to help learners develop their work. In another art course, learners are challenged to move out of their comfort zone and explore and experiment with new media. However, in the less successful sessions, there is little or no lesson planning. Insufficient consideration is given to individual learning goals, opportunities for learning are not taken and learners are insufficiently challenged by the activities they engage in.

63. Tutors are particularly well qualified and experienced. All have a teaching qualification. Seventy-eight per cent have substantial professional experience. A high percentage are practising artists or work in related industries.

64. Support for learners is satisfactory. Learners speak positively about the help they receive from their tutors. For example, two mature learners have received encouragement and guidance from their tutor to apply to university to study fine art. Although there is no identification of literacy, numeracy and language skills support needs, this does not have a detrimental effect on learners' progress.

65. There is insufficient formal assessment and recording of progress. Initial assessment is inconsistent. Individual learning goals are not always set. Individual learning plans are not used to identify and monitor progress. Little or no written feedback is given to learners. Progress reports are not used effectively and are not routinely shared with learners. Progress reports are produced by some tutors solely to meet ACRES's requirements. Where learners do progress over time towards increasingly challenging goals, this is often initiated by the learners themselves.

66. Planning of programmes to meet individual needs is poor. Publicity materials do not define course levels clearly enough. The curriculum lacks cohesion in providing clear pathways for progression. There are very few advanced classes. Many learners re-enrol on the same course year after year. There is no system in place to collect learners' enquiries or to plan the curriculum in response to feedback from learners or potential learners.

Leadership and management

67. Curriculum management is weak. Many recently introduced systems have yet to be established. Performance monitoring is not yet sufficiently effective. The process of observation of teaching and learning as a means of quality improvement is not established or sufficiently effective. Only six out of 36 tutors have been observed. The observations are not generally carried out by subject specialists. The process of observation does not

include feedback from learners and the standard of their work is not examined. The feedback given to tutors is superficial and lacks insight of good practice in the curriculum area. For example, one observer did not recognise the advantages to art and design learners of a mixed-ability class. Although observation grades are moderated and recorded, there is no analysis of outcomes to provide an overview of common strengths and weaknesses which could support staff development and the sharing of good practice. There is no culture of continuous improvement. A few tutors have attended a training event on recognising and recording progress and achievement in non-accredited learning. There is generally very little understanding of the importance of this practice to improve teaching and learning. Formal course review and evaluation is superficial and there is no evidence of its effect upon the quality of provision. Tutors are insufficiently involved in the self-assessment process. The self-assessment report gives an appropriate grade to the provision. Overall recruitment targets are set for centres but not at course level. Targets for retention and achievement rates are not set. There is no systematic quality monitoring of course documents. Some lesson plans and schemes of work are not checked until the summer term. Insufficient attention is paid to health and safety. For example, in the photography provision at one centre there is no first aid box or protective clothing available. In another centre, safe darkroom working practices are not reinforced. Electrical equipment is not regularly tested.

Languages, literature and culture**Grade 4**

Contributory areas:	Number of learners	Contributory grade
<i>Language, literature and culture of the British Isles</i> Adult and community learning	30	4
<i>Other languages, literature and culture</i> Adult and community learning	317	4

68. Courses in languages, literature and culture represent about 15 per cent of ACRES's provision. ACRES offers courses in English literature, French, German, Italian, Spanish, British Sign Language and a general certificate of secondary education in English. There are progression routes for French, Italian and Spanish up to advanced level. Classes take place in 18 venues including youth centres, village halls and all seven community colleges. Courses are provided during the day and in the evenings. Most non-accredited courses recruit termly and last for 10 to 15 weeks. At the time of inspection, out of the 347 enrolments on 41 courses, 59 learners were on subcontracted courses. To date in 2005-06, 69 per cent of learners are women and 13 per cent are aged 65 plus. Nearly 2 per cent of learners are from minority ethnic groups and less than 1 per cent declared a learning or physical disability. The provision is managed by three centre managers and teaching is shared by 36 part-time tutors, eight of whom are new to the provision.

Strengths

- no significant strengths identified

Weaknesses

- insufficient attention to learners' individual needs
- insufficiently developed curriculum management

Achievement and standards

69. Around 12 per cent of language provision is accredited. Achievement rates on accredited courses are satisfactory overall. Retention rates cannot be analysed because data is unreliable, but in the classes observed by inspectors, a satisfactory 79 per cent of learners were in attendance. There is evidence of some progression to higher-level courses, but data is incomplete, and the extent of this is not known. Learners are well motivated, participate well in class activities and develop confidence. Most learners who are still on programme have developed language skills to a satisfactory level.

The quality of provision

70. Most teaching is satisfactory. However, it is generally dull and pedestrian and a narrow range of teaching and learning techniques is used. Tutors rely heavily on textbooks and often plan their courses around units of these textbooks. In some instances, the textbooks are not suitable or are out of date. Sixty-seven per cent of tutors have the target language as their first language. However, most do not use the target language sufficiently during sessions, even at advanced levels. Learners do not benefit sufficiently from hearing the language being used fluently to improve their language comprehension or

pronunciation skills. Some tutors do not employ effective language teaching strategies such as planning stages in the learning process. There is little use of body language to prompt or correct learners. Errors are not systematically corrected when appropriate, and learners' mistakes are frequently reinforced by repetition. Seating arrangements in classrooms are often not conducive to effective interaction. Most classes are tutor-dominated and do not offer enough scope for learners to participate and develop confidence in speaking skills.

71. Most accommodation is satisfactory. Some classrooms are well equipped. However, most tutors have not been trained to use equipment such as interactive whiteboards. In many classrooms, audiovisual aids are not available or are not working. Some tutors bring their own equipment to the more remote venues. Most tutors have at least a basic teaching qualification, although few have subject-specific teaching qualifications.

72. The range of provision is satisfactory. Progression routes are generally appropriate. Where appropriate progression opportunities are not available, some learners are directed to courses offered by other providers so that they can continue with their studies.

73. Support for learners is satisfactory. If individual support needs are identified, tutors are asked to refer learners to specialist services. No such need has been identified this academic year. ACRES does not carry out initial assessment to identify literacy, numeracy or language support needs. The information given to learners before enrolment does not clearly identify the language levels of courses or progression routes.

74. Insufficient attention is paid to the individual needs of learners. Initial assessment is neither routinely nor effectively carried out. Learners' starting points are not always identified and are very rarely recorded. The individual needs of learners are not reflected in lesson planning. Tutors do not set individual targets and learners' progress is not systematically reviewed and recorded. Learners have little idea of what they have achieved and what they need to work on further. The activities and materials used in class do not take into account learners' differing learning styles and needs. In most classes, activities are too closely controlled by the tutors, who allow little scope for learners to use language creatively and to interact with each other.

Leadership and management

75. Curriculum management is insufficiently developed. Staff meetings have recently been introduced and the minutes are sent to tutors who are unable to attend. However, attendance is poor. There are no subject-specific targets for retention and achievement rates. Managers do not have a clear overview of in-year retention rates and tutors are not consistent in the completion of registers and reporting of absence. Data on progression is available, but it is not presented in a format that can be easily accessed and analysed. Managers have actively reviewed the curriculum offer and progression routes. However, in 2005-06 approximately 45 per cent of the planned courses were cancelled. Only five of the current 36 tutors have been observed since the introduction of the new system of observation of teaching and learning. Although observers noted the same areas for improvement as inspectors, the grades awarded were too generous. Feedback to tutors who have been observed has not been sufficiently developmental. Subject-specific professional development has not yet been introduced. There is insufficient opportunity to share good practice. Training in recognising and recording progress and achievement in non-accredited learning has taken place, but only one tutor has attended so far. Staff have

not been trained to identify learners' literacy, numeracy and language skills support needs, and are not sufficiently aware of how to promote equality and diversity in teaching and learning. The self-assessment report is insufficiently focused on language development, and the grade it gives for provision is higher than the grade given by inspectors.

Preparation for life and work**Grade 4**

Contributory areas:	Number of learners	Contributory grade
Literacy Adult and community learning	71	4
Numeracy Adult and community learning	42	4
ESOL Adult and community learning	125	4
Literacy and numeracy Adult and community learning	7	4
Independent living and leisure skills Adult and community learning	544	4

76. There are 789 learners enrolled on programmes in this area of learning, of whom 379 are on programmes for adults with learning difficulties and/or disabilities subcontracted by the local authority. There are 71 learners on courses in literacy, 42 in numeracy, 125 in English for speakers of other languages (ESOL), seven in literacy and numeracy, and 544 in independent living and leisure skills. Learners attend programmes at the community colleges and at community venues, including residential homes and day centres in the case of adults with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. Many learners attend courses at more than one venue. Courses run for between two and five hours a week. Literacy, numeracy and ESOL courses usually run for 10 weeks, while courses for adults with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are generally 20 to 37 weeks in length. Fifty-nine per cent of the 29 literacy, numeracy and ESOL courses are held during the day. Eighty-six per cent of the 50 courses for adults with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are held during the day. Most learners on literacy and numeracy courses are working towards a national qualification at entry level, level 1 or level 2. Most provision for adults with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is unaccredited, and 11 of the accredited courses are subcontracted by Sussex Downs College. One hundred and twenty-five adults with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are working towards pre-entry qualifications, for example in art and citizenship. There are 19 tutors offering literacy, numeracy and ESOL provision. They are supported by a skills for life manager. The 36 tutors offering provision for adults with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are supported by a manager and a co-ordinator.

77. The ESOL provision was included in the inspection, but is not reported on separately.

Literacy and numeracy*Strengths*

- high pass rates for numeracy tests
- good development of learners' confidence and self-esteem

Weaknesses

- poor attendance

- inadequate initial assessment arrangements
- insufficient range of teaching and learning methods to meet individual needs
- insufficient recognition and sharing of good practice
- poor awareness of equality of opportunity

Achievement and standards

77. Pass rates in numeracy tests are high, at 100 per cent so far in 2005-06. However, few learners have taken tests to date. There has been low take-up of national tests in literacy and numeracy, but ACRES is taking action to rectify this. Improvements are now in place to streamline entry procedures and learners will have more opportunities to practise literacy and numeracy skills in a more structured way before taking tests.

78. Learners develop good levels of confidence and self-esteem. They participate well in most classes. Most are enthusiastic, show a good level of interest in the topic and concentrate well on tasks. Learners particularly enjoy work that relates to real-life situations and contexts. They comment that they are now able to spell better, write letters of complaint to suppliers and understand the use of suffixes. Several learners are particularly pleased that they can confidently use recipes using metric measurements and can also work out how much wallpaper is required to decorate a room in their home. Through attending numeracy classes, learners' fears of numerical concepts and terms have been reduced.

79. Attendance is poor overall. The attendance rate was 37 per cent in one literacy class and 57 per cent in another. Attendance in numeracy classes is better, with the lowest rate at 68 per cent. Retention is satisfactory.

The quality of provision

80. The range of classes offered in literacy and numeracy is satisfactory in meeting the needs and interests of learners. However, provision is not yet aimed at the areas of the community with greatest need. Insufficient information is given to learners to help them to identify appropriate course levels. The information available does not clearly explain the qualification opportunities offered.

81. The level of support for learners in class is appropriate but variable. Assistants are used satisfactorily in some classes. Most accommodation is satisfactory, with appropriate physical access to ACRES's centres and community venues.

82. Initial assessment arrangements are inadequate. Initial assessment is not routinely carried out at the beginning of courses. Some tutors have difficulty in identifying the levels of competence of learners. In one numeracy class, initial assessment had only been introduced in the week before the inspection. Plans are in place for September 2006 to ensure that all learners are assessed before starting their courses.

83. The range of teaching and learning methods is too limited in most lessons to meet the individual needs of learners. Some tutors rely too much on worksheets to develop learners' reading, writing and language skills. In one literacy session the worksheets used were too difficult for the learners' language levels. Many worksheets contain too few visual

images. There is little use of ILT. In one numeracy class an interactive whiteboard was available but the tutor had not been trained to use it. The traditional whiteboard used instead was of very poor quality. Visual aids are not used well. For example, writing on overhead acetates in some classes was in small print and difficult to read. Few tutors clearly state the learning outcomes of the session and review them at the end. In better sessions, learners are involved in a range of practical activities which are stimulating and lively. These lessons are planned well with detailed outcomes and include a range of activities to meet individual needs. The learners are clearly able to demonstrate the skills and knowledge they have gained.

Leadership and management

84. Most aspects of leadership and management of literacy and numeracy provision are satisfactory, including internal verification arrangements. The appointment of a skills for life specialist manager has resulted in some improvements. The manager has responsibility for literacy, numeracy and ESOL provision. Communications with tutors have improved and update meetings for tutors have been introduced. Opportunities for training and continuing professional development are appropriate. Tutors speak positively about these improvements. There are clear plans to improve initial assessment for the next academic year. However, quality assurance and improvement arrangements are not fully established. Staff use a wide range of documents and resources which are not monitored or evaluated. Although the self-assessment process did not effectively involve tutors, it identified key weaknesses in the provision.

85. Good practice in teaching and learning has not been recognised or shared. Some good systems for planning learning have not been recognised or disseminated to other tutors. Some tutors spend time researching and creating good-quality resources that could be of value to others. Little use is made of observation of teaching and learning to improve the quality of lessons. Only two out of 19 skills for life tutors have been observed this year. However, meetings to review resources are planned. The need to share good practice is acknowledged and appropriate plans are being made.

86. Tutors and learners have poor awareness of equality of opportunity and diversity issues. Learners do not understand their rights and responsibilities or the procedures to make a complaint. They are issued with a learners' handbook which is written in small print, making it difficult to read for those with language and reading difficulties. Equality and diversity issues are not covered at the start of courses or reinforced through the review process. Equality and diversity are not promoted through teaching or the use of learning materials that are culturally sensitive to individual needs.

Independent living and leisure skills

Strengths

- good celebration of learners' achievement

Weaknesses

- poor punctuality
- insufficient attention to individual learning needs
- much inadequate teaching

- insufficient planning of provision to widen participation and provide progression opportunities
- inadequate arrangements to improve the quality of teaching and learning
- poor equality of opportunity awareness, training and promotion

Achievement and standards

87. Learners' participation in classes is satisfactory. Most are enthusiastic about their work and some show good levels of independence and concentration during group activities.

88. Most learners on accredited courses are on target to achieve their planned qualification. Attainment on non-accredited provision is not rigorously monitored. Retention rates and attendance are satisfactory.

89. Punctuality is poor in many classes. During the inspection, learners arrived 40 minutes late to one class and 20 minutes late to another. The poor punctuality disrupts learning for other members of the class. Transport problems from residential homes have been identified as an issue by ACRES. Carers and residential home staff have been asked to ensure that learners arrive at classes on time. However, there has been little improvement in punctuality to date.

The quality of provision

90. ACRES celebrates learners' achievements well. An annual event is planned and organised by learners. An art exhibition of learners' work was open to the public and reported in the local press. There are centre awards evenings at which certificates are handed out to learners. However, not all tutors are aware of these events or value the process.

91. Insufficient attention is paid to individual learning needs. There is insufficient initial assessment, particularly on non-accredited courses. Lesson plans for non-accredited provision do not include targets to improve literacy and numeracy skills. Individual learning plans are not completed for non-accredited courses. Individual targets are not set and progress is not systematically monitored. Individual learning plans on accredited courses often refer to course goals rather than individual aims, and are not used by tutors for lesson planning. There is no evidence of recording challenging personal or wider learning goals. Two tutors have developed their own system for recording learners' achievements. This has not been identified by ACRES as an example of good practice to be shared with other tutors.

92. Much inadequate teaching was observed by inspectors. There is much dull and uninspiring teaching. In many lessons the learners are given mundane tasks to complete. The teaching is often at a level below the levels of competence of the learners and does not hold their interest. Too much reliance is placed on tutors' input, group work and worksheets. ILT is rarely used. Few opportunities are taken to promote and develop communication, literacy and numeracy skills. Little consideration is given to responding to individual learning styles. In many classes, carers and classroom assistants are available to support learners. In most cases, the tutor and support staff are unclear about the support worker's role in helping learners to achieve. In the better sessions, tutors prepare well and record learners' progress.

93. ACRES does not plan provision sufficiently to widen participation and provide progression opportunities. In some areas there is restricted access to daytime provision. Current plans to reduce daytime provision in favour of twilight programmes have not sufficiently considered the established routines and transport limitations of many learners. Learners' programmes are often disrupted by the cancellation of classes. One course has been suspended due to a staffing problem. There is very little integration of provision for adults with learning difficulties and/or disabilities with mainstream provision. At one centre, adults with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are restricted from leaving their premises when the school pupils are nearby. There are few joint projects or initiatives to encourage integration, and little extension of learning opportunities in the wider community. Much provision is held in residential homes and day centres. There are few opportunities for learners to progress into mainstream provision or provision in community locations. Many learners continue on the same programme for too long. For example, one learner has been on a course for six years. On the other hand, another learner is in the second year of a course that is at an inappropriate level and he is therefore unable to participate.

Leadership and management

94. A curriculum specialist has been appointed to support tutors and implement quality assurance arrangements. This has resulted in some improvements to the management of the curriculum. Some tutors have noted improvements in communication from centres and managers, but others still find communication poor. Tutors' update meetings have been introduced and there are satisfactory opportunities for training and continuing professional development. However, few tutors have taken up the opportunities available. Some tutors have little experience of working with adults with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and many have no teaching or subject qualifications. Although most accommodation is satisfactory, one centre is no longer suitable and some classrooms are small and cramped. Arrangements for the external moderation of externally accredited qualifications are satisfactory. Tutors were not involved in the self-assessment process, although some have seen the self-assessment report. The report does not identify key weaknesses in the provision. There has been slow progress towards implementing the objectives in the development plan.

95. Arrangements to improve teaching and learning are inadequate. There is too much inadequate teaching. Too few observations of teaching and learning have been carried out. Six of the 36 tutors have been observed by ACRES's staff on behalf of the local authority. Most tutors have had a class visit. However, class visits are not improving the quality of documents such as lesson plans and individual learning plans. New or recently qualified tutors are not routinely observed during their first year. There are insufficient opportunities to share good practice between centres and tutors. For example, some good systems for planning learning have not been recognised or disseminated.

96. Equality of opportunity awareness, training and promotion are poor. Tutors and learners have a poor awareness of equality of opportunity and diversity issues. Tutors have not been offered training on key issues like the Disability Discrimination Act 2005 or the requirements of the Children's Act 2004 with regard to vulnerable adults up to the age of 25. The learners' handbook is not given to learners on independent living and leisure skills programmes. There are plans to produce a suitable alternative. Tutors do not cover equality of opportunity issues with learners. Learning materials do not promote equality of

opportunity or diversity. Equality of opportunity and diversity are not promoted through the curriculum offer, links with the wider community or progression opportunities into mainstream programmes.

