

REINSPECTION REPORT

Brent LEA Reinspection

23 November 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.

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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DESCRIPTION OF THE PROVIDER

1. Brent is a culturally diverse area. Many residents only stay for limited periods and there are frequent changes in the profile populations. Many of these people require entry level and basic skills in information and communications technology (ICT). Brent adult and community education service (BACES) was inspected in November 2005, when its overall effectiveness was judged to be satisfactory. All aspects of its provision including leadership and management were satisfactory except ICT which was inadequate.

GRADES

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

Grades awarded at previous inspection

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

Health, public services and care			3
Contributory areas:	Number of learners	Contributory grade	
Complementary health services Adult and community learning	108	3	
Social care Adult and community learning	109	3	
Counselling Adult and community learning	67	3	
Early years Adult and community learning	155	3	

Information and communications technology			4
Contributory areas:	Number of learners	Contributory grade	
Developing IT systems Adult and community learning	48	4	
ICT for users Adult and community learning	647	4	

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Retail and commercial enterprise		3
Contributory areas:	Number of learners	Contributory grade
Hairdressing Adult and community learning	75	3
Beauty therapy Adult and community learning	195	3

Arts, media and publishing		3
Contributory areas:	Number of learners	Contributory grade
Dance Adult and community learning	82	3
Music Adult and community learning	116	3
Fine arts Adult and community learning	105	3
Crafts Adult and community learning	420	3

Preparation for life and work		3
Contributory areas:	Number of learners	Contributory grade
ESOL Adult and community learning	1,696	3 3
Literacy and numeracy Adult and community learning	669	3 3
Independent living and leisure skills Adult and community learning	121	3 3

Family learning		3
Contributory areas:	Number of learners	Contributory grade
Adult and community learning Adult and community learning	122	3 3

Grades awarded at reinspection

Information and communications technology		2
Contributory areas:	Number of learners	Contributory grade
ICT for users Adult and community learning	308	2 2

ABOUT THE REINSPECTION

2. The reinspection was carried out over four visits. There were two single-day visits with one inspector, one two-day visit by another inspector and a three-day final visit by both inspectors. At the reinspection the quality of ICT provision was good. Overall effectiveness remained the same.

Number of inspectors	2
Number of inspection days	10
Number of learners interviewed	32
Number of staff interviewed	12
Number of locations/sites/learning centres visited	4
Number of visits	3

AREAS OF LEARNING

Information and communications technology

Grade 2

Contributory areas:	Number of learners	Contributory grade
<i>ICT for users</i>		2
Adult and community learning	308	2

3. Since previous inspection and for this academic year, BACES has significantly altered its provision. Most of it is now accredited and it offers a using ICT course at entry level and at levels 1 and 2. There are a very few specialist and non-accredited courses. BACES plans to increase the range of its provision in the current year after the reinspection process is complete. Courses are provided at four centres in the borough, during the day and in the evening.

ICT for users

Strengths

- high retention rates
- good development of confidence and ICT skills
- rigorous and effective initial assessment
- good curriculum leadership and management
- particularly effective action to deal with previous weaknesses

Weaknesses

- insufficient cultural variety in teaching materials and examples

Achievement and standards

4. Retention rates are high. These have significantly improved since the previous inspection. Of the learners who started in the current year, 94 per cent are still in learning. Achievement on non-accredited courses in 2005-06 is satisfactory with 79 per cent of learners achieving the learning goals. BACES has successfully dealt with the weakness identified at the previous inspection on accredited courses and achievement has improved. For the current year, courses which have been completed have achievement rates of around 78 per cent. Early indications show an upward trend for other courses.

5. BACES has successfully maintained the strength regarding the good development of personal skills and confidence. Many learners have never used a computer before starting on a course, but they develop good skills such as being able to use the internet, and have good mouse control. Learners also increase their confidence and are eager to test their skills and experiment with various options. The standard of many learners' work is high and they are well prepared to progress to the next level of study.

The quality of provision

6. BACES has successfully dealt with the weakness from the previous inspection of too much poor teaching. The quality of teaching and learning has significantly improved and is now satisfactory. In the better lessons, teachers make good use of the ICT equipment, particularly the interactive white boards and projectors, and involve learners in giving demonstrations. These lessons are industrious and challenging. Teachers use questioning well to establish what learners know and to extend their knowledge. The better lessons are well planned to provide alternative activities for learners at different stages or with different experiences of using information technology. In most lessons a very good learning environment is created where learners work industriously for the whole lesson. Many learners start earlier and finish later than the planned lesson times, in order to develop their experience.

7. Lesson plans and schemes of work have been standardised and improved and they focus well on learning. Good use is made of contingency plans for system failures. These plans are well thought out and are used when necessary. Technical support is quick and responsive. Teachers pay good attention to health and safety aspects of computer use. Learners' progress is monitored well and recorded clearly and in detail. Teachers are fully aware of each learner's development and lesson plans are amended regularly to account for different needs as they change over time. In a minority of lessons, teachers do not use sufficient questions to involve learners. They are reluctant to let learners work through exercises at their own pace, so that the quicker learners are sometimes kept waiting. In a few cases, some technically challenging topics are covered too quickly or superficially for learners to fully understand them.

8. Initial assessment has been improved and is now rigorous and effective. Course information is clear and well written. Assessment questions have been reviewed and are now relevant to the subject area. Joint working with the skills for life team is particularly good. Skills for life is the government's strategy on training in literacy, numeracy and the use of language. All ICT applicants whose first language is not English now have an assessment of their spoken and written language skills. This assessment is particularly well focused on the type of language used in ICT classes. Learners who have insufficient skills are redirected to classes for English for speakers of other languages (ESOL) where appropriate. Learners who want to go on to higher-level ICT courses are required to either show evidence of prior attainment or have to take an ICT skills assessment. Assessment results are available to staff and are used well to create detailed individual learning plans. All learners interviewed were clearly on the most appropriate course. BACES effectively identifies learners who have additional support needs and good arrangements are in place to meet these needs.

9. BACES works effectively with the local community to provide courses as required. It has a good knowledge of the local population which is diverse with a fluctuating profile. The main demand is for entry level and level 1 qualifications. BACES offers qualifications up to and including level 2. It signposts people well onto further and higher levels of study. Courses are delivered at the four main centres during the day and in the evening. However, the range of provision has reduced and it does not now cater for many specialist needs.

10. Support for learners is good. In lessons, teachers are attentive and their support is

swift, sensitive and effective. Learners value the support they receive. Many teachers offer learners the opportunity to ask questions by e-mail outside the lessons. In addition, BACES makes every effort to allow learners to start early and finish late to maximise the use of ICT resources.

Leadership and management

11. Arrangements for the management of the curriculum area have been clarified and strengthened. A single curriculum manager now provides a clear focus for staff. Regular meetings have been established and are well attended. They are used to good effect to share good practice. Team working is particularly strong within the curriculum area. Staff are keen to work as a team and share resources and ideas. Communications are good and all staff are well informed of developments in the curriculum area, and their contributions are recognised and valued. Staff recognise the importance of their contribution to retention and achievement.

12. Action to deal with previous weaknesses has been particularly effective. In many cases, BACES has worked on the weaknesses to turn them into strengths. Senior management have focused on improving the ICT provision. Staff are fully aware of the quality of the provision. Particular attention has been paid to improving the resources and maximising the use of existing resources. Many sites have new equipment and most rooms have interactive white boards and projectors. Good use is made of wall space to display learners' work and informative posters. The new virtual learning environment has been successfully launched and teachers and learners are starting to use it well. Staff development is good and has been particularly focused on improving teaching and learning. All staff are effectively encouraged to work towards a teaching qualification. Good use is made of observations of teaching and learning to identify and share good practice, and to identify areas for development. BACES has successfully gained agreement to carry out peer observations, and particularly effective teachers are used as mentors for new staff.

13. The cultural diversity of the borough is well represented by teachers and learners and this is reflected in teaching and learning materials. However, insufficient use is made of multicultural examples, for example when visiting websites. Satisfactory use is made of data on equality. Improvement action-planning is clear and detailed. Challenging targets for improvement are set, monitored well, and met. The self-assessment process includes staff and makes good use of learner feedback and course evaluations. The self-assessment report is sufficiently evaluative and is accurate.

