

Middlesbrough Adult Education Service

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Background information

Inspection judgements

Inspectors use a four-point scale to summarise their judgements about achievement and standards, the quality of provision, and leadership and management, which includes a grade for equality of opportunity.

Key for inspection grades

Grade 1	Outstanding
Grade 2	Good
Grade 3	Satisfactory
Grade 4	Inadequate

Further information can be found on how inspection judgements are made on www.ofsted.gov.uk.

Scope of the inspection

In deciding the scope of the inspection, inspectors take account of the provider's most recent self-assessment report and development plans, and comments from the local Learning and Skills Council (LSC) or other funding body. Where appropriate, inspectors also consider the previous inspection report (www.ofsted.gov.uk), reports from the inspectorates' quality monitoring or annual assessment visits, and data on learners and their achievements over the period since the previous inspection.

In addition to reporting on overall effectiveness of the organisation, its capacity to improve further, achievement and standards, quality of provision and leadership and management, this inspection focused on specialist provision in:

- Information and communication technology
- Arts, media and publishing
- Languages, literature and culture
- Preparation for life and work
- Family learning

Provision in other areas was sampled to inform judgements on the overall effectiveness of the provider. Middlesbrough Adult Education Service's **learndirect** and Train to Gain provision were not included in the scope of this inspection.

Description of the provider

1. Middlesbrough Adult Education Service (MAES) is part of Middlesbrough Local Education Authority. Most learners come from the Middlesbrough area. Part-time learning programmes are provided in 12 sector subject areas. MAES works with a large number of partners from statutory and voluntary sectors.
2. MAES operates within the Community Education Division of Middlesbrough Council's Children Families and Learning Department. The community education manager, responsible to the head of the council's lifelong learning division, has responsibility for strategic-planning for adult and community learning (ACL) and for developing policies and action plans. She is also responsible for managing the adult education budgets. She is supported by a finance manager and finance administration assistants, an ICT network manager, an ICT technician, an accountant, five curriculum co-ordinators an information and communication technology (ICT) co-ordinator who doubles as a deputy. The service also employs two full-time ICT tutors, a full-time skills for life tutor, two part-time family learning support workers and 189 part-time tutors. Administrative support is supplied by three full-time and eight part-time clerical assistants.
3. Additionally, the service employs a manager, a skills for life tutor, and a full-time clerical assistant who the Neighbourhood Learning in Deprived Communities project funds. They are based at the Learning Shop, a venue in Middlesbrough town centre. Support is provided from this centre by two information and guidance officers.
4. Staff are located at the two main venues. Classes are offered from 103 community venues throughout the borough including schools, community centres, sports centres, hospitals, social services premises, the mosque and the international centre. MAES delivers all provision itself. Around 300 courses are offered. In 2006-07 a total of 5011 learners enrolled on courses, of whom 35% were male, 13% were from a minority ethnic group and 61% were new learners.
5. Middlesbrough is defined as an area of severe deprivation. The proportion of people from minority ethnic groups is 6.8%. Adults' literacy and numeracy levels are lower than the national average.
6. Tees Valley LSC funds MAES's ACL provision through personal and community development, first steps, further education, family learning, numeracy and languages, and neighbourhood learning in deprived communities budgets.

Summary of grades awarded

Effectiveness of provision	Good: Grade 2
Capacity to improve	Good: Grade 2
Achievement and standards	Satisfactory: Grade 3
Quality of provision	Good: Grade 2
Leadership and management	Good: Grade 2
Equality of opportunity	Good: Grade 2

Sector subject area

Information and communications technology	Good: Grade 2
Arts, media and publishing	Satisfactory: Grade 3
Languages, literature and culture	Good: Grade 2
Preparation for life and work	Good: Grade 2
Family learning	Good: Grade 2

Overall judgement

Effectiveness of provision

Good: Grade 2

7. The overall effectiveness of the provision is good. Leadership and management and equality of opportunity are good. Middlesbrough Unitary Authority sets clear strategic directions for the adult education service, which staff understand well. Good use is made of partnerships to provide progression routes and avoid duplication of courses. Very effective action is taken to widen participation. Courses are developed specifically to meet the needs of under-represented groups and are located to provide easy access. Many courses are held in deprived areas. Although the management information system has improved since the previous inspection, it is insufficiently robust.
8. The quality of the provision is good. Teaching and learning are good. Learners enjoy their classes and are keen to help each other. Tutors use a good variety of methods and resources to stimulate and encourage learners. Much good, innovative work has been done to introduce the virtual learning environment and ICT into the curriculum. Some teaching does not take enough account of different ability levels. The range of programmes and activities offered to meet learners' needs is good. Many changes have been made to ensure programmes meet learners' job skill needs and government priorities. Partnership working to access, encourage and support new learners is good. Learner support is good. Learners with physical disabilities and learning difficulties achieve well. A wide range of adaptive equipment and support in and out of the class is provided. Learning support is well managed. The service employs a high proportion of tutors with physical disabilities and learning difficulties and supports them well. A simple, user friendly system for recognising and recording progress and achievement is in place but its effect is variable. Achievement and standards are satisfactory. Success rates on English as a second or other language (ESOL) programmes are unsatisfactory.

Capacity to improve

Good: Grade 2

9. The provider has a good capacity to improve. MAES has made many improvements since the previous inspection and minimised the negative effects on learners of increasing budget restrictions. MAES is a self-critical organisation and is constantly evaluating its performance. The range of courses leading to accredited achievements has increased. The curriculum is more focused on providing work related skills. An innovative virtual learning environment has been developed and is being used in many curriculum areas to aid learning and teaching. Weaknesses identified in the previous inspection report have been satisfactorily addressed.
10. The self-assessment process effectively improves the quality of provision for learners. Inspection findings confirmed most of the grades, strengths and areas for improvement identified in the self-assessment report. Performance is evaluated at staff meetings and the results and proposed actions are recorded in log books. The logs are active working documents. They are regularly reviewed across the organisation and lead to improvement action plans. The logs are the basis of the annual self-assessment reports. Some tutors do not attend meetings and are not involved in the process.

Key strengths

- Clear strategic direction
- Good use of partnerships
- Good continuous improvement
- Very effective action to widen participation
- Much good teaching and learning
- Very effective support for learners and tutors

Key areas for improvement

- Insufficiently robust management information system
- Inconsistently effective recognising and recording progress and achievement system
- Some insufficient differentiation in lesson planning

Main findings

Achievement and standards

Satisfactory: Grade 3

11. Achievement and standards are satisfactory. Achievement is good on national literacy and numeracy tests, British sign language (BSL), lip-reading and most ICT courses. Achievement of literacy and numeracy qualifications in family learning is good and the take up of accreditation is high. Success rates on some ESOL programmes are unsatisfactory. Retention is good on most courses, but is low on short ICT courses, as self-assessment identified. In arts, media and publishing the standard of learners' work is satisfactory. Most learners report improvements in their confidence. Opportunities for accreditation are good and have increased significantly since the previous inspection. Attendance in 2006-07 was good at 80% and increased by 4% on the previous year.

Quality of provision

Good: Grade 2

12. Teaching and learning are good, as identified through self-assessment. Learners enjoy their classes and are keen to help each other. In the best classes a wide range of activities are well matched to the needs and interests of learners and the pace is challenging. Tutors use a variety of methods and good resources to stimulate and encourage their learners. Much good, innovative work has been done to introduce the virtual learning environment and ICT into the curriculum particularly in languages, family learning and art. Learners' literacy and numeracy needs are identified and supported well. In some classes teaching does not take enough account of different ability levels. In some ICT classes teaching methods lack variety.
13. A good range of programmes and activities are offered to meet learners' needs. Self-assessment identified that a wide range of courses at different levels are available at accessible locations. Of the 300 programmes offered, over 95% now offer accreditation. National vocational qualifications (NVQs) at levels 2 and 3, Train to Gain and **learnirect** programmes are now offered. The community sports leaders' award has been introduced to meet the government's sport for all agenda. Community development and family learning provision is particularly flexible and learner led. Partnership working to access, encourage and support new learners is good.
14. Guidance and support for learners are good, as identified through self-assessment. A wide range of adaptive equipment is available. Classroom support workers help on an individual basis where needed. Learners with physical disabilities achieve well. Support for learners with dyslexia is good. Initial assessment, testing and advice can be provided. Discrete sessions are provided within literacy and numeracy for those with dyslexia. Tutors receive good training to help them support learners. Links with other organisations to provide support are good. Discrete provision is provided for adults with learning difficulties at partners' premises. Partners have received good training from MAES on how to identify and support learning needs. Learning support is well managed and carefully monitored. MAES employs a high proportion of tutors with physical disabilities and learning difficulties and supports them well. Support for non-attenders is particularly robust. Tutors and central staff contact those learners missing lessons to see what further support they can provide.

15. Initial advice and guidance is satisfactory. Potential learners who attend the Learning Shop receive very good advice and immediate guidance and support. Identification of learning needs through initial assessment is good in family learning and preparation for life and work and satisfactory in art, ICT and languages.
16. A simple, user-friendly recognising and recording progress and achievement system is in place but its effect is variable. Some individual learning plans are used well, but others are vague and lack realistic timescales. Recognising and recording progress and achievement in ICT and art is suitable for recording achievement but not for motivating learners and driving learning.

Leadership and management

Good: Grade 2

Equality of opportunity

Good: Grade 2

17. Leadership and management are good as identified through self-assessment. Middlesbrough Unitary Authority sets clear strategic directions for the adult education service. The priorities of the authority and the policies of the LSC contribute to strategic decisions. All staff and appropriate council members are aware of the issues facing MAES and monitor the progress being made. Strategic priorities are reflected in the curriculum area action plans.
18. MAES makes good use of partnerships, working very closely with other council services and other agencies and providers. MAES take an active role in the Middlesbrough Learning Partnership which ensures that objective information and guidance is provided to prospective learners through the Learning Shop. The close partnerships provide good progression routes and avoid duplication of courses.
19. Internal communications are good and regular meetings keep staff informed of service developments. Tutors are well qualified. Managers support staff well with training and appraisals that promote their professional development. Accommodation is satisfactory or good. Most centres are accessible to learners with reduced mobility.
20. Continuous improvement is good. MAES is a self-critical organisation and is constantly evaluating its performance and looking for improvements. The self-assessment process is effective.
21. MAES has a well planned programme of annual observations of each tutor. All new tutors are observed within their first term. Feedback to the staff is good and the results of observations are used to identify development needs. Some observers place insufficient emphasis on learning. Although there is a rigorous system to moderate observation findings, MAES's grade profile is higher than those awarded during inspection. In some curriculum areas, observations lack sufficient specialist insight.
22. Equality of opportunity is good. MAES takes very effective action to widen participation. Data related to minority and under-represented groups of learners is analysed and action taken where appropriate. Provision is carefully developed in

consultation with the community and targeted to meet harder to reach learners. For example, men are targeted through the driving skills course. Courses aimed at Muslim women are situated in a local mosque. A high proportion of courses are held in deprived areas of the town. Currently 63% of learners are in receipt of benefits, and 40% are from deprived wards. Learners from minority groups and those with specific difficulties are made to feel welcome and are confident that their needs will be met. Senior staff have a good understanding of equality and diversity and are committed to widening participation and providing appropriate additional support. Some opportunities to promote equality and diversity in lessons are missed by course tutors. Enrolment of learners from minority ethnic groups and of those with disabilities is good.

23. Although the management information system has improved since the previous inspection, it is insufficiently robust. In some instances the data produced does not agree with figures manually calculated from the source records. Records are not always sufficient to provide staff with all the information needed to monitor learners' progress. Some co-ordinators find the management information system difficult to access. Many co-ordinators use their own, generally accurate, records to inform decision-making. The systems to audit and assure the accuracy of management information are inadequate. Training for new management information system staff and monitoring of their work is insufficient. MAES is aware of some shortcomings of the system and is in the process of reviewing the system.

What learners like:

- Helpful, patient, knowledgeable and friendly staff
- The social side - meeting people and making new friends 'when you are here you're not alone anymore'
- 'Meeting people from different cultures and countries and finding out what they are really like'
- Learning new and interesting things
- Working at their own pace
- The improvements in their confidence

What learners think could improve:

- The length of courses – 'some longer courses would be better'
- Less time gaps between terms
- Better publicity of the courses

Sector subject areas

Information and communication technology

Good: Grade 2

Context

24. A curriculum co-ordinator, four full-time and 14 part-time tutors support 370 learners who are enrolled on 39 ICT courses. Subjects offered include using common information technology (IT) programmes and the internet, personal computer maintenance and digital imaging. Provision ranges from beginners' taster courses to level 3. Most courses offer learners opportunities to accredit their learning with nationally recognised qualifications. Most learners attend one of the 14 community venues. Some learn at their place of work, or online. During 2006-07 there were 927 learners, 63% of whom were women and 11% of whom were from minority ethnic groups.

Strengths

- Good achievements by learners who complete their courses
- Innovative teaching and learning methods
- Particularly valuable additional practical advice for many learners
- Very good programmes to meet learners' and employers' needs
- Good support for learners
- Good support for staff
- Good partnership working

Areas for improvement

- Insufficient differentiation in teaching and learning
- Low retention rates on short courses

Achievement and standards

25. Achievements and standards are good. Learners who remain on courses achieve very well. Of the learners who completed short courses, 98% achieved their learning aims. These courses represent 90% of the provision. On level 3 courses, 81% of learners also succeeded. Learners achieve useful practical skills. For instance, one learner is collecting and restoring old family photographs to create a family archive. Some learn how to use their computer for official letters or internet shopping. Most learners are on target to complete successfully and make every effort to attend. Their enthusiasm creates a good, friendly atmosphere conducive to learning. Learners are keen to help each other. Many take a succession of courses. Learners grow in confidence and self-esteem. Self-assessment accurately identified that the proportion of learners who complete short courses although increasing, is still low at 71%. Further analysis of success and completion was not possible as data on the level of courses was insufficiently reliable.

Quality of provision

26. The quality of provision is good. A large proportion of teaching and learning is satisfactory. Inspectors observed no unsatisfactory teaching or learning. MAES has developed many innovative and effective teaching and learning methods. Tutors use a virtual learning environment extensively to make images, handouts and presentations available to learners. Some learners and their tutors use the system to communicate, allowing those on shifts or those with irregular work patterns to complete their courses. Other learners enjoy using MAES's award-winning innovative computer-based simulations. These allow them to practise skills including using a camera or maintaining a computer, without worrying about getting anything wrong. Some learners are starting to use electronic individual learning plans and to develop linked online portfolios.
27. In many sessions, learners benefit from tutors sharing their commercial experience and practical skills. Tutors provide good practical advice, often on how to minimise costs. For instance in digital imaging classes learners get advice on how to stitch photos together to create panoramic views, with a minimal financial outlay. Tutors' support in classes is energetic and committed. Assessment helps learners to see what they have achieved and helps them to improve.
28. Tutors sometimes take insufficient account of differences between learners' levels of computer literacy when planning and teaching their lessons. Their management of learners' requests for help is not always effective. Some fail to maximise the value of learners' peer support. In a minority of lessons, the tutor cannot respond quickly enough to all those seeking support. Some learners wait too long for support, while others are inactive for extended periods. Some individual support is ineffective, for instance when the tutor does not check that the learner has understood what they have demonstrated or explained. The pace of learning slows as learners are unable to repeat the techniques demonstrated. Some individual learning plans do not identify learners' interests and experiences sufficiently clearly.
29. Learning venues are welcoming and equipped to high professional standards. In a minority of venues, furniture does not allow learners to conform to guidelines on good posture, and learners are insufficiently aware of the need for appropriate chairs when using computers for extended periods.
30. Programmes meet the needs of learners and employers particularly well. Free beginners' courses are successful in attracting returning learners. Good progression routes take learners from absolute beginners to level 3 and beyond through links with local further and higher education providers. Courses are offered in computer hardware and leisure uses of computers as well as typical desktop programmes. The extensive and increasing use of the virtual learning environment introduces learners to the rich potential of online activities as well as providing additional enriching learning opportunities. MAES provides flexible modes of course delivery to meet the needs of shift workers and works with the local council to improve council workers' IT skills.
31. Support for learners is particularly good. Staff have analysed the literacy and numeracy skills needed in the computer qualifications, and these have informed language, literacy and numeracy courses. Tutors identify additional learning needs, and refer those with language, literacy and numeracy needs appropriately. A high proportion of those on computer taster courses go on to language, literacy and numeracy programmes. Managers ask learners for their views, and incorporate learners' recommendations

where possible. Staff have been trained in disability awareness and use a range of adaptive technology well.

Leadership and management

32. Leadership and management are good. Partnerships with other organisations are particularly effective in aligning conditions and expectations of staff, mutually supporting technological innovations, and in developing the curriculum to meet local priorities. Managers use key service priorities such as retention to develop performance targets with staff. Staff and managers discuss other priorities such as promoting equality of opportunity at regular, well-minuted, team meetings and develop effective good practice. Managers' use of data is satisfactory. Course records provide satisfactory information on achievement and retention, but do not provide sufficient detail for targeted action.
33. Issues identified at the previous inspection have been satisfactorily addressed. Self-assessment processes are comprehensive and use learners' and partners' views. MAES's observations of teaching and learning awarded higher grades than found during inspection, but identified the same issues.

Arts, media and publishing

Satisfactory: Grade 3

Context

34. At the time of the inspection 286 learners were enrolled on 14 different courses in 11 venues including community centres, schools, a mosque, a library and a church hall. Courses include digital photography, dressmaking, art history, basic art, pottery, card making, painting and drawing, embroidery, stained glass, digital imaging, jewellery, guitar and singing for fun. Optional accreditation is offered in art and photography. Most courses are held for two hours each week for 10 weeks. A co-ordinator, who is shared with other sections of the service, and 12 part-time tutors support the area. During 2006-07, there were 567 learners. Females make up 71% of the learners, 2.5%

are from minority ethnic groups, 12% have a declared disability, 49% are aged over 60 and 27% are new learners.

Strengths

- Good and improving retention
- Good skills development
- Some good teaching
- Effective quality improvement

Areas for improvement

- Weak lesson planning
- Ineffective individual learning plans
- Insufficient subject expertise in the management of the programme

Achievement and standards

35. Achievement and standards are satisfactory. Retention is good on most courses and has continued to improve over three years. In 2006-07 retention on all courses was over 80%. Attendance during the inspection was good at 83%. Learners develop good practical skills. In dressmaking and card making learners use a variety of techniques. In a beginners' digital photography class on location in a park learners gained confidence by practising landscape, wild life and close-up photography meeting live challenges successfully.
36. Guitar and singing class learners play publicly within the community, for example, at a home for the elderly. Learners' art is displayed in local venues. Overall the standard of learners' work is satisfactory. Learners enjoy their lessons and relationships with teachers are warm and friendly. In a basic art class one learner valued the opportunity to meet with others as the only break from her responsibilities as a carer. In craft classes older learners keep their minds stimulated and their fingers supple by working with tools and materials.

Quality of provision

37. The quality of provision is satisfactory. Some teaching is good. Teachers are experienced, enthusiastic and supportive and all have a teaching qualification. Relationships with learners are warm and positive. In the best sessions, lessons are purposeful and learners industrious. In a well presented history of art lesson, learners were engaged by a demonstration of how Renaissance portrait painters may have used a convex mirror to project an image on to canvas. A lively discussion of other examples of distortion in historical and contemporary paintings followed. In a basic art lesson learners researched and developed ideas before composing a painting with a harvest theme. Tracing and photocopies were used creatively to experiment with different combinations and sizes of images. Learners found this challenging and inspiring. Individuals are encouraged to work at their own pace and teachers are good at integrating new and more experienced learners socially. However, learning is passive in many classes where opportunities are lost to use questioning to reinforce learning. The range of provision is satisfactory and locations are accessible to learners.

38. Learning support is good. Tutors take care to ensure appropriate adjustments are made within classrooms and for access and transport. A presentation on basic skills has led to greater awareness of the support available for literacy and numeracy. Good use is made of gapped handouts to help dressmaking learners with ESOL acquire technical terms and understand health and safety procedures. Jewellery making learners who struggled with different measurements have been provided with charts showing both imperial and metric measurements.
39. Lesson planning is weak. Although schemes of work and lesson plans are in place in all classes, documentation is not standardised and the quality varies. Most plans are minimal and change little from week to week. In craft classes there is little reference to design skills or contemporary or historical design to stimulate and inspire learning.
40. Use of individual learning plans is ineffective. Initial assessment is used to determine the learners' starting points and teachers have customised their own documents for this. Assessment and review are ongoing and a few teachers are beginning to use digital cameras to record progress. However, individual learning plans are not yet used to drive learning. Teachers and learners do not fully appreciate their benefits. Learners of different levels are taught in the same class, and return frequently. There is little or no effective planning for the needs of those learners who are returning to a class. For these learners teachers' expectations are too low and learning objectives are insufficiently challenging.

Leadership and management

41. Leadership and management are satisfactory. Quality improvement is effective. Many improvements have been made in consultation with the learners since the previous inspection. For example, provision has been moved into better accommodation, access has been improved and numbers monitored to ensure there is no overcrowding. Learners now receive fact sheets to guide them in their purchase of materials and equipment. Charts are now provided explaining progression opportunities for learners to local colleges. Electronic registration is now in place and tutors effectively monitor attendance. Self-assessment is largely accurate. Teachers' detailed course books are reviewed annually. Actions identified contribute to the self-assessment report.
42. Overall, accommodation and resources are satisfactory. However, the lighting in one jewellery class is poor. ICT is beginning to be integrated with the curriculum and staff development is provided for teachers to develop ICT and photographic skills to record learners' work. New courses in digital imaging have been added to the provision.
43. Subject expertise in the management of the programme is insufficient. Capacities to improve technical standards of teaching and learning and apply appropriate recognising and recording progress and achievement processes are effected. Observations of teaching and learning take place regularly. However, some reports lack subject specialist insight and there is insufficient identification and sharing of good practice.

Languages, literature and culture

Good: Grade 2

Context

44. In 2006-07, 58 courses were offered in 10 languages to 660 learners. At the time of the inspection 475 learners were attending 37 courses in nine languages at seven centres. Most courses are in two-hour sessions and last for 30 weeks with 65% in the evenings. Courses are available in BSL, French, German, Greek, Japanese, lip-reading, Polish, Russian and Spanish. Entry to advanced level is offered in the most popular languages. All but Polish and Russian courses have more than one level offered. All courses are accredited. The programme is managed by two co-ordinators, one of whom is full-time, and is delivered by 12 part-time tutors.

Strengths

- Good retention and achievement rates in BSL and lip-reading
- Good teaching and learning
- Good support for learners
- Strong partnership working
- Strong management of the area

Areas for improvement

- Some insufficient lesson planning to meet individual learning needs

Achievement and standards

45. In 2006-07 the retention and achievement rates for BSL were good. The retention rate for BSL was 91% and the achievement rates were 87% at level 1, and 61% at level 2. For Lip-reading the retention rate was good at 92%, with very good achievement also at 92%. These rates represent an upward trend in these two areas which formed 19% of learners. The retention and achievement rates for modern languages are satisfactory. It is not possible to identify trends in modern languages as the accreditation has changed recently and data is not comparable. Most learners develop their language skills at an appropriate level. Many report an increase in confidence and achievement of their personal goals. Three learners have progressed to language teaching and one learner who successfully completed level 2 in BSL is now tutoring deaf learners in ICT.

Quality of provision

46. Much of the teaching and learning is good. In the classes observed there is good use of target languages. Tutors employ a mixture of learner-centred tasks as well as tutor-led activities. Resources and teaching materials are generally good and support learning. Many centres have very good IT facilities. Most lessons are conducted at a brisk pace which challenges the learner. Learners participate enthusiastically and gain much enjoyment from their classes as well as increasing their skills and knowledge. All learners have individual learning plans although the standard of their completion is variable and many learners do not appreciate their use in recording their progress.
47. The standard of lesson planning is variable and the format is not standardised. Most do not include notes on differentiation to meet the individual needs of learners. There is little evaluation of what worked well in the lessons. Some do not have approximate timings and in one lesson observed the plan was merely a list of topics.
48. A satisfactory range of provision is offered. One successful course in BSL is for Asian women who are either deaf themselves or have family members with hearing loss. Programme planning is very much learner driven. Postcode analysis and an awareness of the need to provide progression opportunities are also factors.
49. Support for learners is good. Tutors provide a high level of support in class and there are activities outside the classroom which enhance learning. For example, a link with a German class has been operating for 14 years and results in a joint meeting annually either in the United Kingdom or Germany. There is a similar link with a town in France. Learners are kept well informed of cultural activities which are taking place locally in the language they are studying. Several enjoyed a concert in French given in a local hotel and there are visits to cinemas and restaurants. BSL learners watch interpreted meetings and performances at theatres. Additional lessons in English grammar and IT take place on a regular basis to encourage learners to continue with their learning of a foreign language. Many learners find the innovative languages material produced in the virtual learning environment helpful. It consists of taster lessons in several of the languages offered and contains the materials used in lessons so that learners can revise or catch up in the case of absence, together with links to useful websites. Information on courses available and guidance on choice of course are adequate.

Leadership and management

50. Leadership and management are good. Partnerships with local providers of adult and secondary education and the deaf centre in Middlesbrough are good. These partnerships

help in the sharing of good practice and help many learners with their social confidence. MAES supports partners well.

51. The area is managed by two managers who form a strong team combining innovation with experience. Tutors are well supported by their managers. Good practice in developing online resources which can be shared has been recognised nationally. Opportunities for continuing professional development are frequent and the take-up by tutors is good. In modern languages the tutor holds individual coaching sessions with tutors on training needs identified during observation or appraisal. In BSL, where tutors do not have English as their first language, the co-ordinator performs induction, gives details of further courses to learners and provides help with paperwork. Meetings are held at regular intervals which are minuted and an interpreter assists where there are deaf tutors present.

52. Observations are carried out by subject specialists or other members of the co-ordinator team and new tutors are prioritised. Last year all tutors were observed. Grades awarded are broadly accurate although some training needs were not identified. A log book is used by the co-ordinators throughout the year to record strengths and weaknesses found by them and tutors and from feedback from learners. These are used to produce the self-assessment report. Self-assessment recorded most of the strengths found during inspection but did not identify the lesson planning weakness. Targets for retention and achievement are set for all classes and monitored by the co-ordinators. However, data from the management information system does not always accord with that kept by the co-ordinators. The materials used in teaching sessions reflect the diversity of society.

Preparation for life and work

Good: Grade 2

Context

53. At the time of the inspection there were 294 learners enrolled on programmes with 70 on literacy courses, 64 on numeracy courses and 160 on ESOL courses. Classes are held in the daytime and in the evening mainly for two hours each week for 30 weeks. They take place in a range of locations including community centres, schools, Sure Start centres, employers' premises and a mosque. During 2006-07, there were 2,234 enrolments by 1,187 learners, 60% of whom were women. Learners can work towards national qualifications from entry level to level 2. The provision is co-ordinated by a full-time ESOL co-ordinator and two skills for life co-ordinators. A full time tutor/organiser and 15 hourly-paid tutors teach on the literacy and numeracy programmes. Sixteen hourly-paid tutors teach on the ESOL programme. Two tutors provide dyslexia support.

Strengths

- Good achievement of national tests in literacy and numeracy
- Good resources
- Good range of responsive provision
- Particularly effective support for learners
- Good partnerships

Areas for improvement

- Poor success rates on entry level ESOL qualifications
- Some weak planning for learning

Achievement and standards

54. Achievement and standards are satisfactory. Success rates for national tests in literacy and numeracy are good, with an overall success rate of 79% in 2006-07. MAES has significantly increased the proportion of literacy and numeracy learners taking national qualifications since 2002-03, when less than a third of learners were entered for national qualifications. In 2005-06, this figure increased to 51%. Retention rates on all programmes are good and improving. For example, retention on ESOL courses has improved from 72% in 2004-05 to 85% in 2006-07. Attendance is satisfactory.

55. Learners' achievement in non-accredited learning is satisfactory. Learners make good progress against personal learning goals. They develop new skills and apply these in their daily lives. Many comment on their increased confidence in, for example, applying for jobs and in communicating with their children's schools. Learners are very

motivated and take pride in their work. Standards of work are satisfactory and learners make satisfactory progress.

56. Success rates are unsatisfactory on ESOL programmes. Only 27% of learners registered for an external qualification achieved a full qualification in 2006-07 and the pass rates for the reading and writing components of the qualifications are poor at all levels.

Quality of provision

57. The quality of provision is good. MAES is highly responsive to the learning needs of the local community providing a wide range of courses at a variety of levels and in a range of locations. Many of these are in areas of high deprivation. MAES responds very effectively to the needs of particular groups of learners. Courses for higher level ESOL learners have recently been developed in response to identified needs. The introduction of key skills qualifications has enhanced progression opportunities. Citizenship programmes have been developed to meet the needs of asylum seekers, refugees and migrant workers. Workplace literacy and numeracy classes for postal workers, and literacy and numeracy support for employees on NVQ programmes are provided.
58. The support for learners is particularly effective. Support is good for learners with learning difficulties and disabilities. Most classes are small and volunteer support workers and classroom assistants provide good individual support. Initial and diagnostic assessment is thorough and systematic. Two experienced tutors provide specialist support for dyslexic learners and advice to tutors. Staff quickly respond to learners' individual needs and provide support with childcare, transport and specialist equipment. Membership of a well established network of community groups and voluntary agencies enables MAES to provide comprehensive support for learners. The network puts hard to reach learners in touch with provision and enables MAES to refer learners to appropriate agencies for information and advice on housing, welfare benefits, employment and immigration. Arrangements for advice and guidance on progression and learning opportunities are satisfactory.
59. Resources are good. Tutors are experienced and well qualified or are working towards specialist qualifications. Learning support assistants receive good guidance from managers and tutors and are used effectively in classes. There is a good range of teaching resources including workbooks and videos. Tutors use digital cameras, computers and audio equipment well to create interesting learning materials. The flexible learning centres are well equipped and welcoming. Accommodation is now satisfactory overall.
60. Teaching and learning are satisfactory. In the better sessions, tutors take account of the individual needs of learners when planning lessons. They provide clear explanations and demonstrate good subject knowledge. Tutors set appropriate objectives for learners and use a range of learning methods, resources and differentiated learning materials. In the less effective sessions, the range of teaching techniques is too narrow and the better learners are insufficiently challenged.
61. Some planning for learning is weak. Targets in individual learning plans are mapped to the core curricula, but some of these targets are vague with no timescales for completion. In some lessons, teaching does not take enough account of learners' different abilities. Some lesson plans and records of work are insufficiently detailed to

guide learning. Some tutors do not concentrate sufficiently on identifying achievement with learners.

Leadership and management

62. Leadership and management are good. MAES has particularly strong partnerships with local agencies, a wide range of community groups and with other departments within the local authority. These partnerships enable the service to make best use of limited resources to provide learning opportunities for people who have not previously engaged in learning and to develop new programmes. MAES is a key partner in the local authority's skills for life for employees' strategy. It is providing literacy and numeracy support to youth workers and teaching assistants on NVQ programmes as part of an initiative to improve the skills base of the local government workforce. Equality of opportunity is good. Staff have an appropriate understanding of equality issues and how to work with learners.
63. The weakness identified at the previous inspection has been addressed. The self-assessment process is well developed and thorough and effectively improves the quality of provision. Learners' evaluations are used to plan and improve provision. MAES has a well established process for identifying learners' needs, setting targets and monitoring progress but this is not monitored sufficiently to ensure consistent practice. The self-assessment report identified most of the strengths and areas for improvement identified during inspection. Tutors are not sufficiently involved in evaluating provision and developing quality improvement plans.

Family learning

Good: Grade 2

Context

64. In 2006-07 family learning had 885 enrolments, of whom 93% were female and 15% were from minority ethnic groups. Of these 56% were on accredited courses including numeracy, literacy and key skills, and the rest on non-accredited courses such as healthy eating, messy play, football fitness and story sacks. Since September 2007 there have been 187 enrolments onto programmes which recruit throughout the year. The courses are held in 23 centres including primary schools and community centres. Classes take place on weekdays and some Saturdays, generally running for between 6 and 12 weeks. The 13 tutors are part-time, mainly teaching between 2 and 16 hours per week.

Strengths

- Very good use of skills in the community
- Much good or better teaching and learning
- Effective provision to meet community needs
- Good support for learners
- Good partnership support
- Good promotion of equality of opportunity

Areas for improvement

- Insufficient sharing of good practice

Achievement and standards

65. Achievement and standards are good. Hard to reach learners develop good personal and social skills to share with their families and the wider community. Learners gain the confidence to speak in front of their peers and learn the advantages of teamwork and effective communication with their children. One deaf learner who joined a class to help his grandson was almost immobilised by lack of confidence. He is now working to help other deaf people to gain self-esteem and reach their potential.
66. Learners' work is often of an exceptional standard. A local newsletter produced by one group of parents and grandparents on an IT course is welcomed as a service in their community. These learners, with little previous academic experience, have exceeded their own and their tutor's expectations of them.
67. Retention is good in both accredited and non-accredited courses at 89% and 90% respectively, with achievement of qualifications at 90% and 91%. During the week of inspection attendance was a good 87%.
68. Progression routes are clearly explained to learners. Some mothers are now volunteers or teaching assistants in schools after progressing to further learning. Their development is carefully monitored and recorded to motivate new learners. Two tutors started out as mothers in family learning classes and worked their way up through university education to become an asset to the service and excellent role models.

Quality of provision

69. The quality of provision is good. Much good or better teaching and learning is facilitated by tutors who work beyond the constraints of the classroom. In the better classes, tutors use well-prepared and imaginative teaching strategies to meet learners'

individual needs. Appropriate methods to integrate learners from a wide range of backgrounds are used. In literacy and numeracy classes, the exercises are relevant to learners' lives. In-depth initial assessment identifies learners' starting points. Flexibly used individual learning plans map progress of learning goals and aspirations. Challenging assignments are planned to suit every learner's particular skills and assessment is given sensitively and regularly to motivate further learning. The content of learning materials values learners' different backgrounds and cultures. Adults and children work positively together.

70. Learning is successfully negotiated with tutors. Recognising and recording progress and achievement is tailored to the individual requirements of each class to become a valued reference tool for the learners. Adult learners begin to value the idea of learning through craftwork and play and acquire language, reading and numeracy skills with ease. They are absorbed in their studies. Learners' achievements are recorded on all courses and programmes are modified and developed accordingly. In the satisfactory classes, learners are not stretched to bring out their full potential. In all classes, good peer group learning, including joint problem-solving, leads to independent learning. Learning materials are suitable and up to date and equipment is provided free of charge. Furniture is suitable for adults.
71. Provision effectively meets community needs. A broad range of varied courses is offered that are flexible and learner-led in content. MAES responds quickly to learners' requests for further and different courses. Learners are able to attend courses in their children's schools within walking distance of their homes. Many parents who had negative experiences of school gain qualifications for the first time. Learners can transfer their new skills to their children in an enjoyable way. Head teachers praise the value of family learning in their schools.
72. Support for learners is good. Parents attend informal meetings and receive an easy-to-follow, comprehensive, attractive brochure and an individual meeting. Good, sensitive initial assessment ensures that learners are comfortable within a chosen course. Courses are free. In partnership with Sure Start, a play bus is employed as a mobile crèche so that learners in different venues can benefit from childcare. Volunteer and Sure Start workers support tutors where learners' needs are diverse.

Leadership and management

73. Leadership and management are good. Partnerships provide good support for family learning. MAES work closely with Sure Start, the extended schools team, primary and some secondary schools. Learners in deprived communities and those where there is evidence of low attainment in numeracy and literacy are targeted. Good working partnerships on both sides ensure the best possible service for learners. For example, extended schools provide a wide range of services and activities, often beyond the school day, to help meet the needs of children, their families and the wider community.
74. Promotion of equality of opportunity is good. Learners of all backgrounds and age ranges take part in courses and make academic and personal progress of benefit to themselves and their communities. Crèches are of a good quality and much valued by learners. The low proportion of male learners is being addressed through some successful initiatives.

75. The self-assessment process is inclusive and identified strengths and areas for improvement found during inspection. The family learning team work closely together, evaluating, consolidating and driving the service forward. However, good practice is not sufficiently shared among tutors. Observations of teaching and learning take place and are recorded. However, observations do not sufficiently identify good practice and too much time is spent answering irrelevant questions, not focusing on learning. Good practice is not being shared effectively amongst tutors.