

Coventry City Council

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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:

- Health, public services and care
- Information and communication technology
- Preparation for life and work

Description of the provider

1. Coventry City Council (the council) has a contract with Coventry and Warwickshire Learning and Skills Council (LSC) to provide adult and community learning (ACL) services to learners across the city. Since April 2006, the council's adult education service (the service) has been part of the community services directorate. The head of the service reports to the head of culture, leisure and libraries. The service focuses on under-represented groups of adults, such as asylum seekers, refugees, the unemployed and people living in priority neighbourhoods.
2. Total enrolments were 22,899 in 2005-06, with 11,645 learners. The total number of learners in 2006-07 was 10,766. The figure for 2007-08 is not yet confirmed as the inspection was at the beginning of the term with many courses having only just started. The service offers courses in nine sector subject areas, including accredited and non-accredited programmes, comprising National Vocational Qualifications (NVQs), family learning, literacy, numeracy and English for speakers of other languages (ESOL). Provision is declining mainly in information and communication technology (ICT), sport, leisure and recreation, and languages. The service uses approximately 70 centres for its provision including schools, community centres and health centres.
3. The head of service has three service managers who co-ordinate delivery across three districts, and who are each responsible for a number of curriculum areas. They also manage academic managers and programme managers in sector subject areas. The provision is delivered by approximately 400 full and part-time tutors. There is also a service manager responsible for staff development and quality improvement.
4. Coventry, located in the West Midlands, has a population of approximately 300,000. The city has significant levels of deprivation in some areas. The automotive industry, one of the city's key employers, has undergone a number of recent closures. In March 2006, the unemployment rate in Coventry was 6.7%, compared with the national average of 5.1%. According to the 2001 census, 16% of the population of Coventry is from minority ethnic groups, compared with 9.1% nationally.

Summary of grades awarded

Effectiveness of provision	Good: Grade 2
Capacity to improve	Good: Grade 2
Achievement and standards	Good: Grade 2
Quality of provision	Good: Grade 2
Leadership and management	Good: Grade 2
Equality of opportunity	Contributory grade: Outstanding: Grade 1

Sector subject area

Health, public services and care	Outstanding: Grade 1
Information and communication technology	Good: Grade 2
Preparation for life and work	Good: Grade 2

Overall judgement

Effectiveness of provision

Good: Grade 2

5. The overall effectiveness of the provision is good. Success rates are high overall and have consistently improved in most curriculum areas each year. Success rates in languages, literature and culture are low but improving. Success rates on non-accredited courses are good.
6. Progression for most learners is good. They progress well through the course levels and also to further and higher education and employment. This is particularly good for those learners with little or no previous academic success. The development of learners' personal, social and vocational skills is good. Learners gain confidence and self-esteem. They make good progress in learning sessions. Standards of work are satisfactory with many learners producing very good work.
7. The quality of provision is good. The quality of provision in health, public services and care is outstanding and the quality of ICT and preparation for life and work provision is good. Progress is monitored well and in some areas particularly well. The service has made improvements to the way progress is monitored and, except in ICT, individual learning plans are generally used well.
8. The service works very well to meet the needs of learners, the community and employers. The council makes very effective use of its strong community links and a wide range of accessible venues, particularly to provide a service that meets learners' skills needs and the needs of the local economy.
9. Leadership and management are good. The service is very well directed and managed. Clear and measurable targets are used well to drive improvements. Communication within, and between, subject areas is good. The service benefits the lives and interests of learners, particularly those from the most disadvantaged communities in the city. Considered strategic planning has dealt well with reductions in government funding. Restructuring to meet changing priorities in community and government targets has helped motivate employees. Self-assessment is accurate and staff development is well managed and effectively includes all staff, including those who teach for only a few hours a week. Staff work well to improve the quality and content of the courses on offer to learners. Good use is made of learning opportunities developed in partnership with agencies and community organisations. The accessibility of learning supports personal, family and community cohesion. Promotion of equality of opportunity and inclusion is outstanding. The service has significantly improved this aspect of its provision and has a diverse population of learners with a variety of learning needs. Support for these needs is well provided. The system for observing teaching and learning has been much improved with a better focus on the learner. However, it is too early to judge its effectiveness in improving teaching.

Capacity to improve

Good: Grade 2

10. The service has demonstrated good capacity to improve. Strategic planning is excellent and staff work well to promote equality and diversity. Through good management and

staff development, the service has dealt with all areas for improvement identified at the previous inspection. Success rates are improving each year. The service has been restructured and now has a curriculum which focuses on offering learners progression from non-accredited entry level to accredited Level 3 programmes in some areas. Partnership-working in the community is very effective at ensuring the service engages with disadvantaged learners. Employability training, especially in the care sector, is making outstanding progress towards serving the interests of employees and those seeking employment.

11. The self-assessment process is comprehensive, critical and honest and judgements on findings are accurate. The service is clear about where it succeeds and where it needs to deal with issues, supporting each case with strong evidence. Inspectors agreed with many of the judgements and grades in the self-assessment report.
12. Quality assurance mechanisms are thorough. Quality improvement planning is good and supported by a well planned and organised staff development programme. Tutor records show how the service's quality improvement plan ensures staff development and tutor support focuses on improving learners' experiences and achievement.

Key strengths

- High success rates
- Good progression for most learners
- Wide range of provision
- Very well directed and managed service
- Good partnership working
- Outstanding arrangements for social inclusion

Key areas for improvement

- Standard of teaching

Main findings

Achievement and standards

Good: Grade 2

13. Success rates are high. In the last three years, the service has maintained a steady improvement in success rates in almost all sector subject areas, so that most are now high or very high. The success rate for Level 2 qualifications overall has risen from 67% in 2003-04, through to 76% in 2004-05 and 83% in 2005-06. For the same years, success rates on Level 3 qualifications have improved from 74% to 78% and 90%. Success rates on non-accredited provision have also risen consistently in most areas. The rates for 2006-07 are over 90% in most sector subject areas.
14. Development of employability skills is good and learners gain in confidence and self-esteem. The development of learners' skills is focused well on their needs and the needs of the local economy. Overall standards of work are satisfactory with many learners producing very good work.

Quality of provision

Good: Grade 2

15. The quality of provision is good. Overall, teaching and learning are satisfactory and inadequate teaching has been significantly reduced. The number of good or better learning sessions has recently increased, and further improvements to the standard of teaching and learning have been identified. In most learning sessions, working relationships between tutors and learners are very good and practical learning sessions are productive and interesting. Teaching and learning are good in health, public services and care. Learning support assistants are enthusiastic and provide learners with patient, careful and sensitive support. Teaching methods in some ESOL and ICT learning sessions are not sufficiently effective, with too much reliance on tutor input, and learning does not always include sufficient learner involvement. Teaching and learning resources are satisfactory overall and good in ICT. Arrangements for recognising and recording progress and achievement on non-accredited courses are good overall.
16. The service meets the needs of learners and employers very well. Programmes are carefully planned to provide a particularly effective balance between accredited further education courses and learning for personal and community development. The programmes are run from over 70 well resourced and easily accessible learning venues across the city including libraries, schools, community centres and voluntary groups.
17. The service is highly effective at attracting new learners. The programmes are flexible and the timing carefully planned to meet learners' needs. Learners have many opportunities to progress from taster courses to accredited classes.
18. Support for learners is good. The self-assessment report accurately identifies this area as a strength. Learners' welfare and personal development are supported well. Tutors provide appropriate and effective personal support for learners, with particularly good support for those with additional learning needs. Tutors and learners benefit from the good support provided by the volunteer partnership scheme. Overall, advice and guidance are good. Advice and guidance for progression and career development is outstanding for learners in

health, public services and care, good for preparation for life and work, and satisfactory for ICT.

Leadership and management

Good: Grade 2

Equality of opportunity

Contributory grade: Outstanding: Grade 1

19. The service is very well directed and managed. A recent restructuring to deal with reductions in government funding, and the realigning of city priority neighbourhood areas, was led and managed well. The opportunity was also taken well to tackle weaknesses found at the previous inspection. The change to tutor and middle management roles and responsibilities was particularly well managed, and well received by staff. Team meetings work well and there is greater cohesion in management and partnership working. Carefully planned efficiency measures have resulted in the service withdrawing from some inadequate accommodation and increasing class sizes in other suitable venues to meet demand.
20. Strategic planning is thorough. A well focused and detailed three-year strategic plan clearly sets out the service's priorities. The plan responds well to city council requirements, to funding and government priorities for adult education, and to community priorities. The strategic planning process is also integrated well with the self-assessment process. It takes into account key service and curriculum area needs identified through the annual self-assessment and quality improvement process. The strategic plan is updated each year and undergoes rigorous scrutiny by directorate and elected city council members.
21. The range of quality improvement measures is comprehensive and effective. During the annual quality improvement cycle, a thorough and accurate self-assessment is prepared using detailed analysis of data on learner achievements, learner surveys and critical reviews of performance by staff and middle management teams. Self-assessment informs an ambitious, yet realistic, quality improvement plan that addresses priority curriculum and cross-service areas for improvement. The quality improvement plan also identifies any necessary action to bring about changes arising from higher level strategic planning. The arrangements for the observation of teaching and learning have been strengthened and are now accurate and sufficiently critical.
22. The staff development programme is particularly well organised and planned. It focuses on strategic and quality improvement planning priorities for the service overall, the nine curriculum areas offered and needs identified through annual staff performance development reviews. Support for all staff working in the service is good. Both full and part-time tutors have an annual performance development assessment. Line managers develop effective action plans to aid tutor performance, while a wider staff development programme addresses recurring issues from performance assessment at a cross-service or curriculum area level.
23. The service response to social inclusion is outstanding. The service puts a high priority on supporting those most in need in city neighbourhoods assessed as priority areas for community and social cohesion. It works very well with partners in the voluntary sector, other city council services and government agencies to engage, support and progress through learning the disaffected, displaced and those disadvantaged economically, socially

and physically. Equality of opportunity and access to courses is also a high priority. The service works exceptionally well to secure funds to support those learners denied access to learning due to financial difficulties. Reflecting a diverse learner population, a service priority for tutors is to embed diversity as a central theme within curriculum content. This is done very well. The service focuses exceptionally well on the diversity of the population of the city and staff and learners have a very high level of understanding of equality and diversity. The service runs a good range of language courses to reflect the ethnic diversity of the city. A range of different specialist courses, for example Bollywood dancing, also reflects this diversity well. The take up of the provision by minority ethnic groups on further education courses is good at 34% compared with the city wide minority ethnic population of 16%.

24. The service has good partnerships with voluntary sector organisations, schools, colleges, libraries, business and departments of the city council. These partnerships benefit the learners well and have been used to good effect to create the wide range of venues and opportunities to learn. The service negotiated well and has established a significant amount of provision at specific community groups venues, working with such organisations as the Muslim resource centre, Indian community centre, The Salvation Army, Kairos and Gosford Asian day centres. These voluntary organisations help the service to recruit learners, act as a first point of contact, and provide an ongoing support structure.

What learners like:

- Interesting, well organised and sometimes free courses - 'Time flies by because we are having fun learning'
- The achievements - 'I am learning new skills and putting them into practice with my children'
- The tutors; support from staff is good and they are very knowledgeable - 'Good teachers make the class light hearted'
- The wide range of opportunities; convenient class times at local venues - 'I can walk to the classes'; 'They are very good at listening to us - we got a course we asked for'
- The relaxed and friendly learning environment - 'Relaxed learning environment and a cup of tea' - 'I would not do it if I had to go to a college'
- The opportunity to learn from others

What learners think could improve:

- Course information – it should be more succinct and specific about contents and benefits
- 'More tasters before we commit to a 10 week programme'
- More practice in speaking English to native speakers
- The crèche provision - 'It is not always organised in time especially in earlier weeks'
- Booking arrangements for popular classes - 'We were turned away from classes without explanation'
- The times courses are on offer - 'More provision in the afternoons'
- 'The workshops are too hot' – 'Woodcarving benches are too small'
- More staff in ESOL classes - 'Too many people needing tutors help means that I have to wait too long'

Sector subject areas

Health, Public Services and Care

Outstanding: Grade 1

Context

25. Coventry LEA offers a total of six courses in health, public services and care. Five of these courses lead to nationally recognised qualifications. In 2006-07, 314 learners enrolled on courses leading to qualifications in care and childcare learning and development. Currently, 147 learners are on courses leading to the NVQ in Children's Learning Care and Development at Level 2 and 73 learners are on a course leading to the Level 3 NVQ in this area. Twenty-four learners are on a course which leads to two units of the City and Guilds certificate in CCLD. The non-accredited courses are designed as a 20 hour taster courses. There are currently 22 learners on this programme which is taught for a total of 20 hours over 10 weeks. Ninety four per cent of the learners are women, almost half are from minority ethnic groups and just over 6% has a disability. Approximately one third of NVQ learners are employed in an appropriate childcare setting and the remainder attend a voluntary placement on a part-time basis. There are 13 tutors delivering the programme, supported by a team of programme managers. Courses take place in schools and community centres during the day and in the evenings. At the time of inspection there were no classes offered in Health and Social Care due to a shortage of staff.

Strengths

- Excellent learner achievement
- Extremely good progression
- Very good teaching and learning
- Particularly effective support
- Excellent leadership and management

Areas for improvement

- No areas for improvement were identified

Achievement and standards

26. Learners' achievement is excellent. Success rates on both the accredited and non-accredited courses have been consistently rising year on year, and are very good. On non-accredited courses success rates were 85% and 86% in 2005-06 and 2006-07 respectively and on accredited courses at Levels 2 and 3 they have improved from 74% in 2003-04 to 84% in 2006-07. This is particularly impressive as most learners have very few previous academic qualifications and live in areas with high levels of social and economic deprivation. Learners gain significantly in confidence and a wide range of employability skills such as attendance and timekeeping. The standard of work is very high and learners know very well how to link theory with practice. Learners' understanding of equality and diversity is outstanding.

27. Learners' progression is extremely good. The percentage of learners progressing from introductory courses to the NVQ programmes is extremely high and has increased in each

of the last three years. In 2006-07, 96% learners on introductory courses progressed to NVQ Level 2. Many learners have been promoted, been employed for the first time or changed employers to enhance their career prospects. Others progress to further and higher education courses. In 2006-07, 10 learners started degree courses in childcare at a local university. The achievement of additional qualifications is good.

Quality of provision

28. Teaching and learning are very good. In lessons, tutors use a wide range of stimulating activities that engage learners, who enthusiastically participate in learning. Discussions are lively and inclusive with learners sharing ideas and making excellent use of work placement experience to illustrate the issues discussed. Tutors use particularly effective questioning techniques that improve learners' understanding of children's learning and development. Learners are assessed rigorously against national standards through workplace observations and scrutiny of portfolios. Individual learning plans are well detailed with rigorous monitoring of progress on both accredited and non-accredited programmes.
29. Teaching of equality and diversity is exceptional. Learners' understanding of equality and diversity is outstanding. Tutors present information well, so that learners understand the impact that equality and diversity has on their own lives, how it affects the young children with whom they work and the issues being faced by a global society. Learners are effectively challenged to explore difficult issues, which they do with a high level of understanding. Tutors provide a safe environment in which learners from a wide range of minority ethnic backgrounds are able to examine personal views and prejudices.
30. Support for learners is particularly effective. Initial advice and guidance is very good. The service identifies learners' needs well. Learners receive prudent advice to ensure that they are placed on the most appropriate course or effectively directed to alternative provision. Additional learning needs are well supported both in-house and through good links with external agencies.
31. Resources are good overall. Teaching resources are clear and used well to enhance learners' understanding. A wide range of in-house and external resources are available to staff. The service has been particularly effective at improving the quality of the course accommodation. Venues are well laid out with clear signs to direct learners. Staff at the venues are not all employed by the service but they all provide a warm welcome and offer good help when needed.
32. A wide range of courses is provided which meets learner needs. All learners are either employed or on a work placement in appropriate early years settings. When surveyed, all employers agreed that training had significantly enhanced and improved learners' workplace practice.

Leadership and management

33. Leadership and management are excellent. The focus of course management is always on the experience of the learner and how it can be improved. Recent organisational changes were managed well. The programme of quality improvements has continued during the period of change. The self-assessment report is detailed, evaluative and accurately reflects the strengths and areas for improvement. Evidence to support judgements is robust, and

includes detailed feedback from employers, learners and staff. The self-assessment report is used well by the quality improvement group, which meets monthly and is responsible for the continued improvement of the service. For example, this group has successfully improved the teaching of equality of opportunity, a weakness at the previous inspection. Accommodation has also been significantly improved. The focus on learner achievement is particularly strong and staff go to great lengths to manage the service and promote learner achievement.

34. Staff are well qualified with wide ranging experience in the early years sector. Staff development opportunities are particularly good and staff continually maintain and improve their levels of skills and knowledge. Communication between managers and staff at all levels is particularly effective. In instances of staff shortages, managers take prompt action in the best interests of learners. For example, three health and social care staff left at very short notice. The service has made excellent arrangements to ensure that learners planning to take these courses are fully aware of the situation and when the courses will start again. The focus on widening participation is strong; managers have been highly successful in recruiting, and helping to succeed high numbers of learners from disadvantaged backgrounds.

Information and Communication Technology

Good: Grade 2

Context

35. ICT represents 12% of Coventry City Council's provision. During 2006-07, 2654 learners enrolled on 246 courses of which 32% were male, 16% were from black and minority ethnic communities, 46% were aged over 60 and 14% declared a disability. Courses are mostly for 10 weeks with sessions lasting between two and three hours. Courses run throughout the day during the week. There is no weekend provision. Over 80% of the programme is non-accredited, delivered in workshops in which learners can study office software applications, digital imaging and different uses of the internet. Separate digital imaging courses are provided at beginner and intermediate level. Accredited courses are provided at Levels 1 and 2 and cover computer literacy, networked hardware and software, and vocational use of ICT. Learners attend at a wide range of venues in the city including schools, libraries, community centres and centres run by voluntary organisations. The provision is delivered by one full-time and 21 part-time, directly employed tutors and managed by a full-time service manager, two full-time academic managers and two full-time programme managers.

Strengths

- High success rates
- Particularly effective individual learning support
- Good resources
- Very responsive provision to meet learners' needs
- Good programme management

Areas for improvement

- Use of individual learning plans

Achievement and standards

36. Success rates are high and have broadly increased. In 2006-07 the success rate in non-accredited courses was very good at 93%, an improvement on the previous year's figure of 89%. The success rate for accredited courses in the same period was good at 81% a significant improvement over the 60% rate for 2005-06. Retention is good for all courses, at over 90%.

37. Standards of learners work are satisfactory. Learners develop a range of computer skills, are well motivated and enjoy their learning. They use their skills in their work and personal lives, including gaining ICT skills to support their learning in other courses. Other learners acquire skills which they use to improve job prospects and to help their children with homework.

Quality of provision

38. Individual learning support is particularly effective. Working relationships between learners and tutors are extremely good. The attention they receive when they ask for help is good. Tutors use question and answer techniques skilfully to enhance learning when helping learners overcome any problems. In some cases, tutors provide extra time at the end of a lesson for additional learning support. Support for learners with sensory impairment is particularly good. A variety of software and hardware to assist learners with visual impairment is used. Where required, signers are provided for the profoundly deaf and readers for the visually impaired.
39. The provision is very responsive in meeting learners' needs. A good range of courses is offered. Accredited courses are available at Levels 1 and 2. A vocational IT qualification is available to support those in employment and industry standard hardware and software courses are available. Leisure workshops give the learner the opportunity to acquire a range of skills in office and internet based applications. Learners in these workshops are able to choose which skill area to pursue. Separate workshops are also available in digital imaging at beginner and intermediate levels. Courses are provided to meet the needs of specific groups. For example, a course set up for a local blind Asian group. The range of venues is good. Learners find it useful attending a centre in their own neighbourhood.
40. Resources are good. Venues are well signposted and well maintained. Rooms are generally bright and welcoming. Most rooms have additional space for learners to work away from the keyboard. Computers are modern, with reliable internet access and industry standard software. The amount of desk space provided is good. Staff are suitably qualified and the ratio of staff to learners is high with most lessons having a maximum of 11 learners. The service has a good range of assistive technology. Staff receive good training in the availability and use of this technology.
41. Teaching and learning are satisfactory. In the better learning sessions, the focus on the attainment of generic skills and the acquisition of appropriate vocabulary is good. Good use is made of resources to enhance learning, for example the use of data projectors to clearly demonstrate software tasks. In other learning sessions however objectives are unclear and not focused on the learning required. Learners are not always clear why they are being asked to perform certain actions and fail to grasp verbal instructions.
42. The process for recognising and recording achievement is satisfactory. The recording of progress and monitoring is often good. However, tutors sometimes record the work completed rather than the skills developed. Additional guidance and support are satisfactory. Learners have to attend a venue to enrol and receive appropriate information about their course. If necessary, a specialist is available to discuss suitable course options. A crèche is provided at a number of centres, without which it would not be possible for some learners to attend classes.
43. The use of individual learning plans is insufficient. The targets set for learners are often unclear. The feedback to learners often lacks detail and does not give them the information they need on how to improve.

Leadership and management

44. Programme management is good. Communication within the service is very effective. Regular meetings are a good forum for identifying and sharing good practice. Line managers communicate very well with tutors. Good use is made of the virtual learning environment for communication between tutors. A variety of well produced resources has

been placed on the virtual learning environment but they are not yet widely used by all tutors. Regular training events for tutors are well attended and they are supported financially to attend them. The service works well with its partners to establish and maintain a good range of venues and resources.

45. Curriculum planning is good and resources are used well to provide a range of courses which meets learner needs. The service has good links with a number of organisations to provide courses, including those for visually impaired learners and older learners, for library employees and to provide the hardware and software course. The self-assessment process is good and inclusive. Information is drawn from a broad range of sources, including learner and tutor feedback, to inform planning. The report is accurate and inspectors agree with the strengths and weaknesses identified although grades awarded for teaching and learning are slightly higher than those observed by inspectors.
46. Other aspects of quality improvement are satisfactory. Some feedback is used to improve processes, for example in the development of individual learning plans. The observation of teaching and learning is satisfactory. The process is well documented and secure, but the implementation of action plans for improvement following observations is sometimes too slow. Promotion of equality of opportunity is positive and has been improved, particularly within lessons.

Preparation for Life and Work

Good: Grade 2

Context

47. The Adult Education Service runs language, literacy and numeracy courses, and further education (FE) and personal and community development learning (PCDL) provision for learners with learning difficulties and disabilities at over forty venues across the city. Classes take place at four council-owned centres, and on the premises of other organisations and providers; for example, schools, libraries and faith communities. Most ESOL classes take place at a single venue, while literacy and numeracy classes and provision for learning difficulties and disabilities is spread over various sites.
48. In 2006-07, there were 3,138 learners on courses in language, literacy and numeracy. Of these, 1,529 were ESOL learners, while 1,609 were studying literacy or numeracy. Of 6982 enrolments, 68% are women, 40.9% were made by people of minority ethnic origin and 20% were made by people declaring a disability. Three hundred and thirteen learners with learning difficulties and disabilities accounted for 758 enrolments on FE programmes. Fifty nine learners accounted for 61 enrolments on PCDL programmes. Of the learners with learning difficulties and disabilities, 14.5% were from minority ethnic groups. Seventy six learners with mental health issues accounted for 146 enrolments of which 38% are from minority ethnic groups.
49. So far this year, 1,411 people have enrolled on language, literacy and numeracy courses: 684 on ESOL courses, 416 on literacy courses and 311 on numeracy courses. Two hundred and twenty learners with learning difficulties and disabilities and 83 learners with mental health issues account for 674 enrolments in the current year, of which 35 are new learners, and 13% are from minority ethnic groups.
50. Learners can study language, literacy, and numeracy up to Level 2 and GCSE English and Mathematics. Courses for learners with learning difficulties are from pre-entry to entry 3 and include work-based enterprise programmes such as horticulture and catering, as well as courses designed to develop skills in problem-solving, communication and self-awareness through a range of subjects. A range of ACL leisure courses is also available. Discrete provision for learners with mental health concerns, developed in conjunction with outside agencies such as MIND, provides opportunities for learners to rediscover and develop skills and build confidence through subjects such as ICT, exercise and art and crafts. Learners this year have the opportunity to achieve nationally recognised qualifications.
51. ESOL groups in the main centre are organised by level, but other groups accommodate learners of differing levels. Literacy and numeracy workshops are also mixed level. Classes are offered throughout the day from Monday to Friday and learners can study for up to 12.5 hours per week. All learners are encouraged to work towards qualifications and are entered for tests when they are judged to be ready.
52. Language, literacy and numeracy provision is overseen by a service manager, responsible for three academic managers. They in turn are responsible for the work of three teams of programme managers (15 staff). There are seven full-time tutors and 59 part-time or sessional staff. The head of Service oversees provision for people with learning difficulties and disabilities. There is one academic manager and four programme

managers. There are two full-time tutors and twenty-one part-time or sessional staff, assisted by two tutors from another area of learning. In 2006-07, six learning support assistants and 68 volunteers supported language, literacy and numeracy learners. Seventeen learning support assistants worked with people with learning difficulties and disabilities.

Strengths

- High success rates
- Good progression of ESOL learners
- Wide range of learning opportunities
- Good support and guidance for learners
- Clear focus in quality improvement

Areas for improvement

- Attendance on language, literacy and numeracy courses
- Planning to meet the individual needs of those with learning difficulties and disabilities and ESOL learners

Achievement and standards

53. Success rates are high and overall have been improving. Non-accredited course success rates improved from 90% in 2005-06 to 93% in 2006-07. Success rates in 2006-07 were above 90% for ESOL at entry Level 2 and above, Literacy at Levels 1 and 2, and for Numeracy at Levels 1 and 2. Success rates for GCSE English and Mathematics are improving. These were 59% and 66% respectively in 2005-06, but already stand at 63% and 79% respectively in 2006-07 with some results still to come in. Retention on programmes for learners with learning difficulties and disabilities is high, with satisfactory achievement and development of learners' skills. The overall retention rate in 2005-06 was 87%. However, success rates for the very small number of learners on ESOL entry Level 1 is low at 55% for 2005-06 and currently only at 36% for 2006-07, albeit with some results still to come in.
54. The progression of ESOL learners is good. Learners progress steadily from level to level and a significant proportion move into employment or further education on leaving their course. A survey of learners who have benefited from learning support showed that a high proportion of those who replied have been able to move into employment.
55. Attendance in literacy, numeracy and language classes is low. The provider identified that during a single term in 2006-07, 47% of all courses had an attendance rate below 75%. In the language, literacy and numeracy lessons observed by inspectors, the rate was 70%. The provider is aware of this and has implemented action to deal with it. It is too early to judge the effectiveness of this action.

Quality of provision

56. The service offers a wide range of learning opportunities. Provision is available across the city in locally accessible venues, and is planned so that learners can participate at times and on a scale that suits them. They can attend for up to 12.5 hours per week for 36 weeks of the year. The programme of workplace learning is well established and being further developed. Provision has been developed for the Probation Service in partnership with

another provider. Provision for learning difficulties and disabilities includes a good range of leisure and work-related programmes. Enhancement of the curriculum is good. External visits to sites of local interest and learners' participation in externally run projects add value to the learning experience. For example, learners with learning difficulties and disabilities were proud to take part in a 'Gardeners World Live' television programme, and received an award for their work.

57. Support for learners is good. The provider identifies and trains volunteers to provide individual support so that learners can access mainstream programmes. This initiative is particularly effective and more than 60 learners benefited in 2006-07. Initial interview and guidance arrangements for language, literacy and numeracy ensure that learners are placed on the appropriate programme. Support for dyslexic learners is good. Two programme managers are qualified to carry out assessments and provide comprehensive guidance for tutors. Visually impaired learners value the specific provision made for them. Programme planning includes end of programme advice and guidance. Effective liaison with the Next Steps service and other providers gives learners the opportunity to access good advice and guidance.
58. Overall, teaching and learning are satisfactory. This is reflected in the provider's own observation grades. Learners are motivated and apply themselves well. The learning environment is positive with a good level of support and encouragement. Lessons are planned so that learners at different levels can work at their own pace. Learners' attainment is satisfactory. Volunteers and learning support assistants assist tutors in a number of groups.
59. ESOL tutors are good at ensuring learners use spoken language, sometimes using a range of visual prompts. In one good lesson, the tutor encouraged entry Level 1 learners to draw upon their own language to help them remember question words in English. Some learners are set interesting tasks for homework and enjoy the challenge. In the better literacy and numeracy lessons, teaching is well planned with a good range of activities for each learner and very good tutor support. In sessions for learners with learning difficulties and those with mental health issues, tutors and learning support staff give good individual support to aid the development of practical skills.
60. In the less successful lessons, too much use is made of poorly reproduced commercial resources that are not close enough to individuals' immediate requirements. Opportunities to draw upon learners' own experience are missed. Tutors sometimes fail to distinguish clearly between the different requirements for speaking and writing. In some literacy sessions there is an over emphasis on group work, with activities that are not differentiated sufficiently to take account of learners at different levels.
61. Planning to meet the needs of literacy and numeracy learners is at least satisfactory and sometimes good. However, planning to meet the individual needs of those with learning difficulties and disabilities and ESOL learners is insufficient. On programmes for those with learning difficulties and disabilities, there is insufficient use of initial assessment to plan individual learning with not enough monitoring and recording of learners' progress. This is identified as an area for improvement in the self-assessment report. Subject-specific initial assessments of learners' skills do not provide an adequate basis from which to plan individual learning or to measure progress. Individual learning plans are sometimes poorly used to identify long and short-term goals. Tutors do not complete end-of-course evaluations thoroughly. Some do not record learners' achievements or progress.

Leadership and management

62. Leadership and management are good. The provider has a good sense of its strengths and areas for improvement, and has a clear focus on quality improvement. Tutors and managers are actively involved in formulating quality improvement strategies. Decisive and effective action has been taken to deal with many of the issues identified in the self-assessment report and at the previous inspection. For example, new approaches have been introduced to tackle low attendance on language, literacy and numeracy courses and the pattern of ESOL provision has been changed to accommodate shift workers. Learning difficulties and disabilities provision and recruitment and enrolment procedures have been altered to help learners select courses more carefully and new accreditation has been introduced.
63. Staff development is linked well to the quality improvement plan and has been used to good effect in many cases. However, there are a few areas for further development; for example, the use of the virtual learning environment. Management commitment to equality and diversity is good with a strong emphasis on social inclusion. The Learner Support Fund is used judiciously to support learners on a low income and the effectiveness of additional learning support is carefully monitored.
64. The observation of teaching and learning scheme has been revised and improvements have been made to the rigour of grades awarded. The focus on learning has improved but some observations still do not pay sufficient attention to learning aims and objectives, and whether or not learners have achieved them. There is not enough focus on the standard of learners' work or rate of progress. Overall, the self-assessment report is reasonably accurate but a few key strengths, while recognised by inspectors, are not always clearly supported by evidence.

