

Suffolk County Council Community Learning and Skills Development 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 (ICT)
- Leisure, travel and tourism
- Arts, media and publishing
- Preparation for life and work
- Family learning

Description of the provider

1. The community learning and skills development (CLSD) service is based in the adult and community services directorate of Suffolk County Council. Courses are offered in 14 sector subject areas, but some have very few enrolments. In 2006/07 there were 25,734 enrolments and 15,826 learners on courses distributed among 331 centres. Adult and community learning (ACL) is the responsibility of the head of service, who is supported by managers for learning standards and curriculum development, learning support and resources and three locality learning managers.
2. The service contracts with Suffolk Learning and Skills Council (LSC) for the provision of accredited and non-accredited adult and community learning. About half of the provision, which is designed for specific target groups, is delivered directly by the ACL service. The remainder is subcontracted to four schools and three colleges of further education. The value of the service's ACL budget is £3,685,500.
3. Suffolk is a large county with a population of approximately 670,000. There are some urban and rural areas, which include some areas with the highest levels of deprivation in the East of England. The working population has relatively low skill levels and employers are not always able to recruit staff with the necessary skills to meet their business needs. Over a third of economically active people in Suffolk do not have a qualification at Level 2 and over one quarter do not have any qualifications at all. There is a relatively small minority ethnic population.

Summary of grades awarded

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

Sector subject areas

Information and communication technology	Satisfactory: Grade 3
Leisure, travel and tourism	Satisfactory: Grade 3
Arts, media and publishing	Satisfactory: Grade 3
Preparation for life and work	Satisfactory: Grade 3
Family learning	Good: Grade 2

Overall judgement

Effectiveness of provision

Satisfactory: Grade 3

4. The overall effectiveness of the provision is satisfactory. Achievement and standards are generally satisfactory. From 2005 to 2007, success rates were high and improving on some preparation for life and work programmes and in family learning. Success rates are low on ICT programmes. The development of learners' skills and confidence is good.
5. The quality of provision is generally satisfactory. The overall quality of learning sessions has deteriorated since the previous inspection. Too many lessons are poorly planned. The range of teaching and learning strategies is limited and the procedures for recognising and recording learners' progress are inadequate. There is little use of information and learning technology and specialist resources are not always effectively used.
6. The service's response to social inclusion and the extent to which programmes and activities meet the needs of learners are satisfactory. Venues are accessible and conveniently located. Community learning managers understand local needs well and they work closely with the service's partners to target provision at under-represented groups.
7. Support and guidance are satisfactory. All learners receiving direct provision are entitled to an impartial information, advice and guidance (IAG) interview with a trained member of staff, though few take advantage of this. The service provides on-site crèches at most of its centres. Learners who have a numeracy, literacy or language need are generally directed to the service's skills for life provision.
8. Leadership and management are satisfactory. Partnership working is good and meets the learning needs of adults. The service works well with other directorates of the county council to extend opportunities for adults through children's centres and extended schools links. Quality improvement arrangements are not thorough enough. The observation of teaching and learning scheme routinely over-grades lessons. Feedback to tutors is unfocused and actions to improve are not always identified. The service has made little progress in improving the quality of provision found by inspectors at the previous inspection.

Capacity to improve

Satisfactory: Grade 3

9. The service has demonstrated satisfactory capacity to improve. Some strengths have been maintained and a few weaknesses have been

resolved. Provision in leisure, travel and tourism, found to be inadequate at reinspection, is now satisfactory. Success rates are improving in some areas and are satisfactory overall. However, quality assurance arrangements remain weak. The quality of teaching has declined as the service does not have an accurate picture about the overall quality of teaching and learning. Many areas for improvement are similar to the weaknesses found at the previous inspection. With the exception of leisure, travel and tourism, inspectors gave the same or lower grades to all aspects of provision as at the previous inspection.

10. The self-assessment report was incomplete and in draft form at the time of the inspection. The process was not sufficiently critical or inclusive. Judgements about many aspects of the provision are not well supported by evidence. The service identified some of the judgements made by inspectors, but many strengths were overstated and significant areas for improvement were not recognised. Inspectors gave the same or a lower grade for all aspects of the provision as in the self-assessment report.

Key strengths

- High success rates on some courses in preparation for life and work and family learning
- Good development of learners' skills and confidence
- Wide range of venues to meet the needs of learners
- Good partnership working

Key areas for improvement

- Insufficient challenge for many learners
- Limited range of teaching and learning strategies
- Insufficient established processes to recognise and record progress and achievement
- Effectiveness of its strategies to promote equality and diversity
- Insufficient and thorough rigorous quality improvement processes

Main findings

Achievement and standards

Satisfactory: Grade 3

11. The self-assessment report judged achievement and standards to be good, however inspectors found achievement and standards to be satisfactory. From 2005 to 2007, success rates were high and improving on some preparation for life and work programmes and in family learning. Success rates are low on ICT programmes. Achievement data for non-accredited provision are insufficient to make valid judgements. Retention is high in leisure, travel and tourism.
12. The development of learners' skills and confidence is good. In ICT, learners gain new skills and are more able to meet the challenges of new technology. In art, media and publishing, learners grow in confidence and self-esteem and many pass on their new skills to children and grandchildren. Learners develop good skills in literacy, numeracy and language in preparation for life and work which greatens their confidence.
13. Learners are insufficiently challenged in many learning sessions. Some learners have attended classes at the same level for many years. Learning activities are not ambitious enough and tasks are limited in scope. Tutors' expectations of learners are not always high enough. Some classes lack structure and have no clear beginning or end.

Quality of provision

Satisfactory: Grade 3

14. The quality of provision is satisfactory overall, but the service's self-assessment report does not identify many key areas for improvement.
15. Inspectors judged most teaching to be satisfactory. Very few lessons were good or better. Individual coaching in ICT lessons is good and learners in family learning classes benefit from teaching that is highly motivating.
16. The wide range of venues across the county meets the needs of learners, particularly those in rural locations. Classes take place in pleasant, welcoming centres which are conveniently located. The service works particularly well with partners to provide programmes to meet the specific needs of under-represented groups such as those recovering from mental health difficulties, the Bangladeshi community and refugees.
17. Support and guidance for learners are satisfactory. All learners in the directly delivered provision have an entitlement to an IAG interview with a trained member of staff, although the take-up of this is lower than the

service's target. Pre-course advice and guidance is satisfactory, though some learners report difficulty in obtaining course information. Learners on courses delivered by the colleges have access to a structured IAG interview. IAG for learners studying at the schools is largely informal. The service provides on-site crèches at most of its centres, which learners value.

18. Tutors use a limited range of teaching and learning strategies. Many lessons are poorly planned. Too much use is made of paper-based resources. Specialist resources in ICT are poor, limiting learners' progress. In family learning and preparation for life and work, specialist resources are not effectively used to support learning. Although much work has been done to promote the use of information and learning technology in lessons, this has not been effective in most subject areas.
19. Processes to recognise and record learners' progress and achievement are not well established. Despite being trained to do so, few tutors make effective use of these processes. The paperwork used to record progress is too simplistic. Learning objectives are often generic group outcomes. Improvements in learners' self-esteem, confidence and team working skills are not effectively recorded or measured. In most cases, the paperwork simply shows that the learner achieved because he or she completed the programme.

Leadership and management

Satisfactory: Grade 3

Equality of opportunity

Satisfactory: Grade 3

20. Leadership and management are satisfactory. As identified in the provider's self-assessment report, there is much good partnership working to meet the learning needs of adults. The service works well with other directorates of the county council to extend opportunities for adults through children's centres and extended schools links. Collaborative work with the primary care trust, Suffolk Carers and a national mental health charity, provides learning to support the health and well-being of vulnerable adults.
21. The service's priority is to widen participation to those learners who experience disadvantage and have low aspirations. The service has recently re-organised to better focus on this goal. Staff are not always aware of the 'direction of travel' of the service and this causes some uncertainty amongst them. There are early signs that the new structure is beginning to have a positive impact on learners and that the service is well-placed to respond effectively to the needs of local communities. The move to focusing on the curriculum delivery is welcomed by most staff.

22. The service has appropriate race, gender and disability equality schemes, as well as policies to tackle bullying and harassment. Staff equality and diversity training is mandatory. The service's 'Learner Entitlement' sets out learners' rights and responsibilities. The proportion of learners from minority ethnic groups is higher than that in the county as a whole. There are good examples of successful targeting of provision to meet the needs of different groups, such as migrant workers. Equality impact assessment is carried out for all new service guidelines and practices. Analysis and review of outcomes for different groups of learners is not routinely carried out. The promotion of diversity through the curriculum is not developed well. The service has correctly identified that the monitoring of equality of opportunity to support target-setting is a key area for improvement.
23. Quality improvement arrangements are insufficiently thorough. The observation of teaching and learning scheme routinely over-grades lessons. Feedback to tutors is unfocused and actions to improve are not always identified. Recommendations for staff development are made, but few tutors attend further training to help them improve. Though there is an adequate set of arrangement to assure quality, and the self-assessment report paints a picture of the service recognised by inspectors, there is limited progress in taking forward the quality improvement targets set out in the service development plan.
24. Self-assessment captures the service's strengths and areas for improvement reasonably well, but the process is insufficiently critical and lacks the necessary detail to effectively support development planning.

What learners like:

- 'The best teacher I have ever had'
- 'I left school at 16 and these are the only art classes I have ever attended, I love them!'
- The crèche is essential– 'I wouldn't be able to come otherwise'
- 'My tutor is very patient with me'
- 'Course is brilliant; really helps with supporting children'
- 'Made me more confident in myself'.
- 'I was presented with my Level 1 certificate at the school assembly. The Head said we are all learners and my son was so proud of me'

What learners think could improve:

- 'We would like internet access'
- 'Don't let them stop this course'
- 'The opportunity to do a refresher course when my children are older'
- 'The amount of paperwork we have to complete'
- The length of the sessions – 'They're too short'

Sector subject areas

Information and communication technology

Satisfactory: Grade 3

Context

25. At the time of the inspection there were 685 learners on 121 ICT courses. Most direct delivery courses are taught over 30 weeks, although learners enrol for five-week periods, enabling some learners to start late. Most of these longer courses lead to a qualification at entry-level or Level one. A substantial minority of courses is delivered over 20 to 30 hours. Most courses are accredited and held during the day and evening. Just over 80% of the learners on direct delivery programmes are women. Most male learners and 25% of female learners are aged over 55. Two thirds of learners attend provision subcontracted to two local colleges of further education and a school. Courses are delivered at community education centres, youth centres and community halls across the county. The programme is managed by an ICT adult and community learning co-ordinator. There are nine part-time tutors on direct delivery courses.

Strengths

- Good development of confidence and skills
- Good coaching of individual learners
- Flexible courses at rural venues for beginners and improvers

Areas for improvement

- Success rates
- Quality of specialist resources at some centres
- Planning and recording of individual learners' progress

Achievement and standards

26. Achievement and standards are satisfactory. Learners' development of confidence and skills is good. Older learners are now able to use email to contact relatives abroad. Others have developed skill in the use of spreadsheets to support relatives' business activities. Those who have been reluctant to adopt new technology are now more confident about using ICT at home and at work. Local churches, rotary clubs and community organisations are benefiting from the skills that learners have developed. Some of the organisations are using digital photography to enliven newsletters to their members. In many cases, communication skills are also improved.

27. Success rates improved from 42% in 2005/06 to 48% in 2006/07, but still remain low. Many older learners appreciate the benefits of learning and attend sessions diligently, but few wish to attain the qualification. Attendance is satisfactory.

Quality of provision

28. Teaching and learning overall are satisfactory. Coaching of individual learners is good. Tutors take full account of the strengths of the individual and the context in which they are learning. Instruction is given in a sensitive and supportive manner and learners are able to put the new skill into practice immediately. Where necessary, learners are encouraged to make a simple note to aid memory and where possible, reference is made to existing written guidance. In one session, the tutor gave a clear demonstration of the method used to protect data files. The learner was then carefully helped to apply the technique. The tutor then put this into the context of the employer protecting payroll data from corruption.
29. The range of provision is good. The service provides flexible courses at rural venues for beginners and improvers. Courses run at times and locations that enable learners who have care responsibilities, to attend. For many older learners, the opportunity to study a range of units at beginner and improver levels provides considerable health and social benefits. On-site crèche facilities enable young mothers to take advantage of learning opportunities at local centres. The beginners and improvers courses provide good opportunities for learners to develop skills in word processing, web design and the use of email.
30. Support and guidance are satisfactory as are information, advice and guidance, however, some courses are very popular and a few learners repeatedly enrol for the same course. Many learners are unable to enrol on their first choice course. Learners with literacy, numeracy or language support needs receive appropriate additional support from specialists.
31. The quality of specialist resources at some centres is poor. Some centres do not have internet access, even though learners require this access in order to demonstrate competence in some units. In other centres, online facilities are only available through dial-up connection, which limits learners' progress and they find this frustrating. At centres where broadband links are available, some functions have been deliberately disabled, preventing appropriate use by learners. Some rooms are cramped, limiting the tutor's ability to move around the class freely. Other rooms have no usable whiteboard.
32. There is ineffective planning and recording of individual learners' progress. Some standard schemes of work and learning plans are inappropriate for ICT sessions. These learning plans do not take account of the workshop environment or of learners' different needs. There is insufficient

recognition of the fact that learners are at different stages in their course. Initial assessment takes place over a five-week period and establishes learners' skills and interests. However, these are not well recorded in individual learning plans (ILP). Too many ILPs lack specific measurable targets and are not correctly dated. Slow progress is not being detected. Learners are often given lesson objectives for each session but these are rarely broken down into individual, short-term, measurable targets. Some learners carefully record progress in learner diaries, which is helping to boost their self-esteem and confirm that they are making progress. Other diaries are too brief to be useful to the learner.

Leadership and management

33. Leadership and management are satisfactory overall. Staff are well-qualified and experienced. Arrangements for appraisal are comprehensive and most staff generally feel well-supported. Internal communications are effectively managed.
34. Equality of opportunity is satisfactorily promoted through learning materials and in poster displays. Learners receive appropriate information about the service's policies and procedures. Staff and learner understanding of equality and diversity is satisfactory.
35. Quality assurance arrangements are generally satisfactory. However, the service has been slow to identify areas for improvement such as low success rates and arrangements for monitoring and recording learners' progress. The service's observation of teaching and learning scheme is too generous in the grades it gives to observed sessions. The self-assessment report accurately identified the strengths found by inspectors but was insufficiently critical in identifying the areas for improvement. Inspectors gave a lower grade for the provision than that in the self-assessment report.

Leisure, travel and tourism

Satisfactory: Grade 3

Context

36. The service subcontracts the whole of its provision in leisure, travel and tourism to four schools and to three further education colleges. The subject sector represents 15% of the service's total adult and community learning provision. All courses are non-accredited. At the time of the inspection, 1,243 learners were attending a total of 95 classes in golf, keep-fit, pilates, swimming and yoga. Courses are mostly delivered in 10 week blocks which are carried out three times a year. Learners typically attend for one or two hours a week. Classes take place on weekdays during the morning, afternoon and evening. Courses are taught by 30 tutors in 31 village halls, community centres and other local venues. Eighty-eight per cent of learners are female and 58% are over the age of 55. One per cent of learners are from minority ethnic backgrounds.

Strengths

- Good retention
- Good partnership arrangements

Areas for improvement

- Monitoring and recording of individual learner progress.
- Observation of teaching and learning process

Achievement and standards

37. Achievement and standards are satisfactory. Retention is good. In 2006/07, 92% of learners attended college provision And the retention in schools-based provision was also good at 88%. Attendance is satisfactory.
38. Most learners demonstrate satisfactory skills development and are able to perform exercises at an appropriate level. In yoga, learners are able to demonstrate poses and stretches to an appropriate standard. Learners report that the skills and knowledge they gain in classes enhance their health and well-being. Many learners develop increased flexibility and mobility and benefit from improvements in their breathing and posture. One learner reports improvements in the frequency and severity of her migraine attacks since beginning yoga classes.

Quality of provision

39. Teaching and learning are satisfactory. Tutors provide clear demonstrations of simple and complex exercises and guide learners

effectively. Adaptations and alternatives for particular movements are also offered and exertion levels effectively monitored. In less effective lessons, tutors do not pay sufficient attention to health and safety and incorrect postures or movements are not always identified or corrected. Some lesson plans do not contain clear learning outcomes and fail to identify how individual learning needs will be met.

40. Guidance and support are satisfactory. Arrangements for providing language, literacy and numeracy support are appropriate. There is clear advice and signposting during the enrolment process for those learners who may require additional support. Tutors are aware of the process, and know how to ensure that learners obtain support if they need it. Information advice and guidance are effective. Specialist enrolment advisors have a detailed understanding of the classes on offer, which they use to signpost learners to the most appropriate class. Tutors make themselves available for pre-course telephone discussions with learners, who are generally well-informed about the guidance available to them.
41. The range of courses is appropriate. Learner feedback suggests that the courses they attend help them to stay healthy, develop social relationships and maintain mental agility. Opportunities for progression to more advanced courses are generally limited. Many classes comprise learners with a very wide range of abilities. Tutors work hard to ensure that activities meet the needs of all learners.
42. The monitoring and recording of individual learner progress is weak. Many tutors and learners are resistant to the service's aim of recording progress and achievement for all learners in non-accredited learning. The paperwork used by tutors to record progress is too simplistic. Learning objectives are often generic group outcomes. Progress for individuals is recorded against this set of broad group learning outcomes. Learners' progress in relation to specific and individual learning goals is not recorded. In many cases, learner progress and achievement is recorded only at the end of the course. Achievement data is not robust. In most cases, the paperwork simply shows that the learner achieved because he or she completed the programme and attained some of the group objectives.

Leadership and management

43. Leadership and management are satisfactory. Partnership arrangements are good. CLSD staff meet partners every two months to discuss quality improvement, programme planning and the development of procedures to record progress and achievement in non-accredited learning. Partners value these meetings as a means of effective communications with CLSD. They co-operate to ensure that provision in adjacent areas is not unnecessarily duplicated. The range of courses offered is appropriately diverse. A preponderance of yoga classes is now supplemented by courses

in golf, bridge, and body conditioning. Collaboration between partners has helped to develop strategies to widen participation through the marketing of courses targeted at men and older learners.

44. The management of resources is satisfactory. Staff are appropriately qualified and experienced. Rooms are warm and well-ventilated. Equipment is satisfactory for the range of learning activities. In a small number of venues, learners complain that floors are not clean.
45. Equality of opportunity arrangements are satisfactory. Tutors demonstrate an appropriate understanding of equality and diversity in the delivery of learning. Most use inclusive language, and consider individual needs carefully. They are aware of how to adapt learning activities to help learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities.
46. The service's observation of teaching and learning scheme is ineffective. The self-assessment fails to recognise this significant area for improvement. Tutors are not observed often enough. Two subcontractors, who deliver most of the provision, observe tutors only once every three years. The number of tutors observed across some of the provision is low. Lessons are overgraded. The grades recorded in the observation reports are too descriptive and not always supported by written evidence. There are few judgements about learning or attainment. There are insufficient references to technical aspects of exercise teaching, such as whether the intensity, progression, or frequency of repetition of activities is appropriate.
47. The self-assessment report was in draft form and incomplete at the time of the inspection. It did not contain judgements about provision subcontracted to the colleges, which constitutes 80% of the provision in this sector area. The self-assessment process identified some of the judgements made by inspectors. However, many claimed strengths are no more than normal practice. The inspection team gave the same grade as that in the self-assessment.

Arts, media and publishing

Satisfactory: Grade 3

Context

48. CLSD's learning programmes in arts, media and publishing represent 45% of its overall adult and community learning provision. At the time of the inspection, there were 2,490 enrolments on 33 courses in art, pottery, music, upholstery, furniture restoration, salsa and ballroom dancing. About 80% of the provision is subcontracted to two colleges of further education. Classes take place in 23 venues which include, schools, village halls and community centres in rural locations throughout Suffolk. Courses are taught in one and a half or two hour sessions over ten weeks and take place on weekdays during the day and evening. Eighty-three per cent of learners are female and 1% are from a minority ethnic background. Sixty-four per cent of learners are aged 55 or under. A learning manager is responsible for the sector area and 20 tutors deliver the direct provision.

Strengths

- Good development of personal and social skills
- Enthusiastic and knowledgeable tutors
- Good range of provision to meet the needs of learners in rural locations

Areas for improvement

- Insufficient challenge in many learning sessions
- Monitoring and recording of individual learner progress
- Quality improvement processes

Achievement and standards

49. Achievement and standards are satisfactory. Learners demonstrate good development of personal and social skills. They enjoy their courses and grow in confidence and self-esteem. Learners describe their participation in learning as a lifeline which develops their interest in art as well as reducing social isolation. Many gain transferable skills and pass on their new skills to children and grandchildren. For many learners, attending class is the highlight of their week. Learners described one memorable pottery class in which the tutor demonstrated the technique of raku firing on pots that learners had previously made in class. Learners enjoyed watching their pots being skilfully fired and then removed from the kiln and finally plunged into water.

50. Learners are insufficiently challenged in many learning sessions. Some learners have attended classes at the same level for many years. Though they enjoy these classes, project work is often insufficiently ambitious or

challenging. Tasks are limited in scale and scope. Tutors' expectations of learners are not always high enough. Some classes lack structure and have no clear beginning or end. Learning outcomes are often vague.

Quality of provision

51. Tutors are enthusiastic and knowledgeable. They are keen to share their skills and specialist knowledge with learners. Many are practising artists or craftsmen and women with current industrial knowledge. Tutors encourage learners to work positively together and to learn from each other. In many classes, tutors foster a good atmosphere of collaborative learning.
52. The range of provision to meet the needs of learners in rural locations is good. Classes are taught in a good range of accessible venues, often in hard-to-reach locations with little public transport. Learners are able to attend a centre close to their home. Many report that they would not be able to attend a more distant learning centre.
53. Teaching and learning are generally satisfactory. In the better classes, tutors provide good demonstrations, which learners appreciate. Complex technical processes are broken down into easily understood tasks, which are explained well. When learners work on their own, tutors are careful to check progress and reinforce learning. The weaker sessions are not well-planned and the pace is slow. Some teachers do not use lesson plans or schemes of work. Too many lessons are uninspiring and dull, with insufficient variety and limited teaching strategies to fully engage learners.
54. Guidance and support are satisfactory. Information, advice and guidance are helpful in directing learners to appropriate programmes. Additional support for learners who have literacy, numeracy or language needs is available, but many tutors do not know how to arrange this for the learners.
55. Monitoring and recording of individual learner progress is inadequate. Tutors do not understand the process of recognising and recording progress and achievement in non-accredited learning. There is little individual planning of learning or imaginative recording of learners' work. The potential for learners to take more responsibility for the direction and pace of their own learning is not exploited. Tutors and learners do not fully appreciate the benefits of using individual learning plans to plan and record progress and achievement.

Leadership and management

56. Leadership and management are satisfactory. Accommodation in specialist rooms is good. Art classes taught in school premises are in stimulating environments. Most general accommodation is satisfactory. There is little

use of ICT to support learning. Tutors provide specialist materials in small quantities for learners. Many learners provide their own specialist tools and materials so that they can work at home in between classes.

57. Equal opportunities arrangements are satisfactory. Learners receive appropriate information about the service's policies and procedures. CLSD is committed to meeting the learning needs of learners in rural locations throughout Suffolk. Actions to recruit more male learners and those from minority ethnic groups have been taken, but the proportion of learners from these groups remains low.
58. Quality improvement processes are ineffective. CLSD's observation of teaching and learning scheme is insufficiently robust. Observation reports are descriptive rather than evaluative. Lessons are overgraded. The grade given for the lesson is not always supported by the text. The service's judgements about the quality of teaching and learning fail to identify poor practice. Inspectors found much satisfactory teaching but very little that was good or better. Targets for actions to improve performance following a teaching observation are not always measurable, realistic or time-bound. The service moderates the grades given by observers for teaching and learning and many lessons are re-graded. However, the time taken to inform tutors of any changes is too long. Communication between tutors and managers to support strategic planning and continuous improvements is weak. Tutors often feel isolated and un-supported.
59. The self-assessment report is not sufficiently critical, inclusive or thorough. The report is very brief and fails to provide any judgements about the quality of the subcontracted provision. Not all stakeholders were invited to contribute to the self-assessment process. Inspectors gave the same grade for the provision as that in the self-assessment.

Preparation for life and work

Satisfactory: Grade 3

Context

60. The service offers a range of part-time literacy, numeracy and English for speakers of other languages (ESOL) courses for 769 learners in community and workplace settings. Most learners are females aged 25 to 44 and of White British background. There are 431 learners on First Step courses that aim to develop confidence and skills in preparation for work and study and 101 learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are following independent living and leisure courses. Courses are offered from pre-entry to Level two and most lead to a qualification.

Strengths

- High success rates on First Steps to learning and work courses
- High success rates in literacy and numeracy in 2005/06
- Good development of skills and confidence
- Good range of courses to meet community needs

Areas for improvement

- Processes to recognise and record progress and achievement
- Facilities and learning resources in some classes
- Curriculum for learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities
- Monitoring of the quality of teaching and learning

Achievement and standards

61. Achievement and standards are satisfactory. Success rates on First Steps to learning and work courses are high. In 2006/07, 78% of learners successfully attained their learning objectives. Success rates for learners on externally accredited literacy and numeracy courses in 2005/06 were also high at 79% and 86%. ESOL success rates were satisfactory at 68%. Success rates for learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities declined in 2006/07, but remained satisfactory. The service does not monitor progression into further learning for First Steps learners.

62. Learners demonstrate good development of skills and confidence in literacy, numeracy and language classes. They gain confidence, become more assertive and are better prepared for work or further learning. Learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities demonstrate good recall and understanding of the community services available to them. Practical sessions in healthy living and eating are effective in increasing learners' independence.

Quality of provision

63. The service offers a good range of courses to meet community needs. Managers work effectively with community partners to meet the demands of local residents in Suffolk and to widen participation. Provision is carefully planned to encourage participation by men and learners from minority ethnic groups. A good range of taster and short courses is offered. Most courses are taught in community venues to meet the needs of learners and partners. The service works effectively with employers to tackle poor levels of literacy, language and numeracy among employees.
64. Teaching and learning are generally satisfactory. In the better sessions, learning is well-managed and relevant to learners' needs and interests. Planning is detailed and focused on individual learners' skills levels. A variety of challenging tasks engages learners. In the weaker sessions, teaching and learning methods are narrow and planning is poor. Learning objectives are not shared with learners. Tutors rely too much on paper-based worksheets and fail to make use of information learning technology.
65. Guidance and support for learners is satisfactory. A range of information, advice and guidance is available to learners who wish to study. Literature in community languages is readily available. Tutors, support assistants, volunteers and carers are effective in helping learners focus and concentrate in sessions and to assist with practical tasks, however, planning for this is not always adequate, particularly in classes with a range of ability levels.
66. Processes to recognise and record progress and achievement are insufficiently established. Though tutors have received training, very few record learners' progress and achievement. Where they are applied, tutors are not always thorough in assessing progress. Individual targets and goals are not always specific and realistic. In language, literacy and numeracy, satisfactory processes for recognising and recording progress have been established, but tutors do not apply these processes effectively or consistently.
67. Facilities and learning resources are poor in some classes. Facilities for food preparation and cookery classes are inadequate, with too few basic cooking tools or specialist kitchen equipment. Lack of space often limits learners' full and safe involvement in the learning process. Health and safety risks are not always sufficiently assessed. Learning resources are insufficiently varied or interesting.

Leadership and management

68. Leadership and management are satisfactory. Managers are now working more closely to share good practise and support tutors. Tutors are adequately qualified and experienced. Opportunities for specialist training in literacy, language and numeracy are insufficient. The quality and use of data is often poor and some key management information is not available to make accurate judgements on performance or to support curriculum planning.
69. Equality of opportunity is satisfactory. There are some good widening participation strategies. A multidisciplinary research project in the county council aimed at safeguarding vulnerable adults and combating hate crime has been developed for learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities.
70. The curriculum for learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is not sufficiently developed. Senior managers have recently restructured the service and many staff now have new roles. The management of provision for this group of learners has been disrupted. A rationale and draft core curriculum structure has been produced in response to changes in funding and care services priorities, but this has not yet been ratified by the service nor has a budget been agreed.
71. Monitoring of the quality of teaching and learning is insufficient. Too few observations of tutors were carried out in 2006/07. Observation reports are insufficiently critical and are not effective in recognising key areas for improvement, such as poor resources or the need for specialist staff training, particularly in literacy, language and numeracy.
72. The self-assessment report is broadly accurate in identifying strengths and areas for improvement. Feedback from tutors, learners and partners are not effectively used during the course review and self-assessment process. Progress in improving the quality of provision since the previous inspection has been slow. The quality of teaching and learning has deteriorated. Inspectors gave a lower grade for the provision than that in the self-assessment report.

Family learning

Good: Grade 2

Context

73. CLSD delivers 32 family learning courses across 30 venues including, schools, community centres, churches and children's centres across Suffolk. There are 723 learners following wider family learning (WFL) programmes designed to encourage parents to support their child's learning or to help them manage their child's behaviour. There are 247 learners attending family literacy, language and numeracy (FLLN) programmes such as Keeping up with the Children, and Play and Language. Eighty-nine per cent of learners are female and 8% are from a minority ethnic background. Seven per cent of learners have learning difficulties and/or disabilities. The sector area is managed by a full-time family learning curriculum adviser and a part-time parenting curriculum adviser. The service employs 38 teachers.

Strengths

- Good success rates
- Good development of personal, social and parenting skills
- Highly motivating learning sessions
- Very good range of provision
- Very good partnership arrangements to widen participation

Areas for improvement

- Assessment practice
- Use of a variety of resources to support teaching and learning

Achievement and standards

74. Achievement and standards are good. Success rates for 2006/07 are good at 90%. Learners make good progress in working towards the national literacy and numeracy tests and parenting qualifications. A high number of learners on non-accredited courses achieve their learning goals.

75. Learners develop good personal, social and parenting skills. Many are now better able to support their children's reading and writing. Learners report increased levels of confidence and self-esteem. They consolidate and develop new parenting skills, such as how to deal with children's challenging behaviour. The standard of learners' work is good. Learners on some parenting courses produce well-thought out written reflections on aspects of their own behaviour and that of their children.

Quality of provision

76. Teaching and learning are generally satisfactory. Learning sessions are highly motivating. Teachers set well-paced and challenging activities, which learners enjoy. Learners are fully committed and engaged in their studies and often form close groups that provide support outside the classroom. Teachers make skilful use of praise and encouragement. Learners actively participate in discussions and respond enthusiastically to questions. They listen attentively and are willing to share personal information that often enables quieter learners to contribute.
77. Teachers use a limited variety of resources to support learning. Teachers have good access to a range of teaching and learning resources, but they do not make sufficient use of them. There is very little use of technology to enhance learning sessions. Too much use is made of handouts and worksheets, which fails to challenge or enthuse learners. Some teachers have access to Smart boards, but lack confidence in their use. Most staff are appropriately qualified, but too few FLLN staff have subject specialist qualifications in literacy, language or numeracy teaching.
78. Assessment practice is insufficiently thorough. Schemes of work and lesson plans rarely identify strategies to assess learners' progress. Assessment recording is inconsistent. The service has been slow in implementing improvements in initial assessment, which was identified as a weakness at the previous inspection. Many learners do not complete initial assessments that adequately identify their skill level or their developmental needs. On FLLN programmes, learners' literacy, language or numeracy needs are not adequately assessed.
79. The service offers a very good range of provision. Over 100 venues are used during the year to provide a wide range of courses in urban and rural locations. Provision is carefully targeted to meet the needs of groups under-represented in family learning such as grandparents, ex-offenders and fathers. Programmes include a good variety of short and intensive FLLN courses. Wider family learning programmes are designed to meet the needs of parents with children of different ages, such as babies and teenagers. Parents appreciate the availability of courses near their home, often in local primary schools. One headteacher reported that by the end of the academic year, he expects 40% of the parents of children at the school to have attended a family learning course.
80. Guidance and support are satisfactory. The service provides good learning support for learners with particular needs, including learning difficulties and/or disabilities. Assistive technology is made available for those who require it. Arrangements for supporting learners with literacy, language or numeracy needs are effective. The provision of IAG is satisfactory.

Learners receive helpful advice about progression opportunities from IAG workers or teachers.

Leadership and management

81. Leadership and management are satisfactory. Partnership arrangements to widen participation are very good. The proportion of learners from groups traditionally under-represented on family learning programmes is good. CLSD staff work in close cooperation with schools and other partner organisations such as the health service, youth offending teams, social services and the prison service to target hard-to-reach learners. Headteachers speak highly of the service. Most staff are appropriately qualified, but too few FLLN staff have subject specialist qualifications in literacy, language or numeracy teaching.
82. Equality of opportunity arrangements are satisfactory. The service has a comprehensive range of policies and procedures which is regularly reviewed by senior managers. The service is successful in targeting provision at learners from under-represented groups. In some sessions, teachers do not always pay sufficient attention to the individual learning needs of all learners.
83. Quality improvement is satisfactory. Teachers and managers use feedback from learners to help in identifying and tackling areas for improvement. Management information is used effectively to analyse general trends which assist in curriculum planning and monitoring of quality. However, data is not broken down in sufficient detail to identify trends at course, school or tutor level. Observations of teaching and learning are well-established and tied in with appropriate staff development activities. However, observers often place too much emphasis on the strengths of the observed session and fail to clearly identify areas for improvement. Observation grades are not always supported by the text and in many cases, the grade given is too high.
84. The self-assessment report correctly identified many of the strengths and areas for improvement found by inspectors, though overall, it is insufficiently critical. Not all staff were adequately involved in the process. Inspectors gave the same grade as that in the self-assessment.

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