

Barnsley Metropolitan Borough 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:

- Hospitality and catering
- Arts, media and publishing
- Languages, literature and culture
- Literacy, numeracy and English for speakers of other languages
- Independent living and leisure skills

Description of the provider

1. Barnsley is one of four districts in South Yorkshire. The east of the borough comprises the towns and villages of former coalfields with some high levels of deprivation. To the west are more affluent, lightly populated areas, although these also contain pockets of deprivation. Barnsley Metropolitan Borough Council (BMBC) is a direct provider of adult and family learning through its adult and family learning service.
2. BMBC receives its funding from South Yorkshire LSC. This includes funding for further education, personal and community development, First Steps, neighbourhood learning and development (NLDC), and family learning. NLDC funding is subcontracted directly, along with other external funding, to the Barnsley Neighbourhood Learning Net. The learning net is contract managed by BMBC and delivered through community partnerships working with individuals, communities and employers to identify and meet specific local needs providing information and brokerage locally. A high number of residents, 41% of the population, have no qualifications and only 16% have qualifications at level 3 and above compared with 28% of adults in England. A high proportion of the population is in receipt of incapacity benefit.
3. In Yorkshire and Humberside, Barnsley is the least ethnically diverse area with a 98% white British population. The largest minority ethnic group is 'other white'. The number of migrant workers from Eastern European countries is increasing. The largest other minority ethnic population is Asian, of largely Indian, Pakistani and Bangladeshi origin, at 0.3%.
4. BMBC's main purpose is to encourage adults, especially those who are disadvantaged and hard to reach, to become involved in learning. It has a number of published priorities as part of the borough's Remaking Learning Vision, including the provision of good quality learning and the support for community development and widening participation. Courses take place in a range of community venues including libraries and church halls. From August 2007 to November 2007, some 2,124 adults made 2,763 enrolments. Courses are offered in eight sector subject areas. At the time of the inspection these were health, public services and care with 119 learners, information and communications technology (ICT) with 469 learners, hospitality and catering with 247 learners, arts, media and publishing with 243 learners, languages, literature and culture with 296 learners and preparation for life and work with 842 learners.
5. Restructuring of the provision has taken place over the last year following a reduction in LSC income and the introduction of a fee policy. Some courses have been discontinued and some staffing levels have been reduced. Remodelling of the staffing structure has taken place and new cross-curriculum roles have been created.

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

Hospitality and catering	Good: Grade 2
Arts, media and publishing	Outstanding: Grade 1
Languages, literature and culture	Good: Grade 2
Literacy, numeracy and English for speakers of other languages	Outstanding: Grade 1
Independent living and leisure skills	Good: Grade 2

Overall judgement

Effectiveness of provision

Good: Grade 2

6. The overall effectiveness of the provision is good. More specifically achievement is good and overall success rates on accredited courses are good and improving. Learners produce a high standard of work and develop good personal and vocational skills. Progression routes are clearly mapped and learners make good progress onto further learning and employment where appropriate. Teaching and learning are good overall. Learning sessions are well planned in most lessons and an appropriate range of learning activities is included. The process for the recognising and recording of learners' progress and

achievement (RARPA) is not consistently applied. In some cases it is outstanding and in others needs further development. Leadership and management are good and the arrangements for equality of opportunity and social inclusion are outstanding.

Capacity to improve

Good: Grade 2

7. BMBC has a good capacity to improve. A strong focus on quality improvement is explicit in its mission and values. New developments and improvements were well managed through a period of significant change. Comprehensive quality monitoring arrangements link clearly to service priorities to improve the curriculum, teaching and learning. Many inspection grades have improved since the previous inspection. Quality improvement processes and documentation have been improved. The learner survey is now scanned using an optical mark reader. Survey analysis and action in response to feedback is prompt. A well-planned sample and completion strategy generates very high response rates. However, the views of employers are not sought formally. A recently produced reporting calendar clearly identifies links and relationships between quality procedures and reporting throughout the year. A comprehensive service level agreement for the neighbourhood learning net partners sets out clear obligations, targets and monitoring expectations. BMBC monitors the work of each neighbourhood learning net manager's activity against targets each month well.
8. The self-assessment process is good. It is inclusive of staff and based on thorough evidence built up over time through progress reviews on the quality improvement plan. A thorough moderation event supports the grading process. Peer moderation, supported by an external 'critical friend' provides constructive discussion and debate about the evidence base and related judgements. The report was generally very close in judgements and grades to those found at inspection. However, the report is too long and overly descriptive in many parts.
9. The process for observation of teaching and learning is generally well planned. It links with the performance and development review process and informs staff development planning. Documents were further refined for 2007-08 to reflect BMBC's development of skills for life across the sector subject areas. Grading is supported by well-differentiated grade descriptors. Grades were moderated this year for the first time. Analysis and reporting of outcomes and monitoring of trends is detailed and shows increased numbers of higher grades. A satisfactory support process is in place for the minority of tutors whose sessions are graded inadequate. However, some aspects of the process are not thorough enough. It is not clear what structured support exists to promote improvement for tutors receiving satisfactory grades in their observations. Most observations result in action points but follow up was identified on a very small minority of sampled records. Summative strengths and areas for improvement are not judgemental enough to clearly relate to grades awarded. Each of these points was identified at early moderation events supported by a Quality Improvement Agency adviser. However, the July 2007 moderation report does not record whether these improvements were implemented.

Key strengths

- Good achievement and standards
- Much good teaching
- Responsive provision that meets learners' needs
- Much effective support

- Good strategic planning and direction
- Strong and effective partnerships that promote coherent learning provision across the borough
- Particularly effective team ethos in management of service provision
- Good staff development arrangements
- Strong focus on quality improvement
- Very effective actions to engage hard to reach learners

Key areas for improvement

- The identification of additional learning needs in some areas
- The availability of information about some provision
- Further development of the RARPA process
- The development of some aspects of the observation of teaching and learning process

Main findings

Achievement and standards

Good: Grade 2

10. Achievement and standards are good. Success rates on accredited courses are good at 81% in 2005-06. They have risen over the last three years from 77% in 2003-04 and 80% in 2004-05 and include all age groups. On other courses achievement is good overall. BMBC uses self-assessment to improve performance through clear target setting. Learners demonstrate good vocational skills and increased confidence and standards of work are good. Learners are able to apply skills and knowledge very effectively in the workplace and within their own families and the wider community. Overall attendance is satisfactory in most classes.

Quality of provision

Good: Grade 2

11. The quality of education and training is good. Much teaching is good or better. Of 40 lessons observed on inspection 65% were judged to be good or better. No teaching was judged inadequate. In arts, media and publishing, learning is well planned and delivered by enthusiastic teachers. Activities are challenging and learners recognise the progress

they are making. Strong emphasis is placed on pronunciation in language teaching with a wide variety of activities to develop and extend learning. In literacy and numeracy planning for individual needs is excellent through innovative teaching that stretches and challenges learners. Learners are highly motivated and demonstrate good quality skills and knowledge. In hospitality, the findings of initial assessment are not used systematically to determine learners' personal goals.

12. Tutor use of the RARPA processes are under-developed in some areas and vary widely across the provision. In arts, media and publishing it is excellent with clear targets for learners that are monitored regularly. Learners are given constructive feedback. However, on some programmes, clear and realistic targets are not systematically set. BMBC recognises this in its self-assessment report and plans are in place to share good practice.
13. The range of courses is good and learners are able to benefit from the opportunities offered to them through a varied curriculum. BMBC provides courses in a diverse range of locations to meet local needs. Initial enquiries about courses are recorded and the information is used to provide additional courses where a need is identified. Staff also plan and offer courses in their sector subject area where they feel that there are new sector developments. For example BMBC is providing a new parent support worker vocational qualification. Bespoke courses provided in response to employer needs include short taster courses to encourage younger people into the bakery trade and English for speakers of other languages (ESOL) support for Eastern European bakery workers.
14. Support for learners is satisfactory. A good range of adaptive equipment and in-class support is available when a need is identified. All buildings used are accessible for people with disabilities. Advice and guidance is satisfactory. The service is responsive in providing classes that learners can progress to. However, there is some variation in the way in which the initial information about courses and subjects is available. Although large amounts of marketing information is generated by the borough, learners reported that they did not always find it easy to discover details of courses, and tended to be there because of personal recommendation from another person rather than promotional literature put out by BMBC.

Leadership and management

Good: Grade 2

Equality of opportunity

Outstanding: Grade 1

15. Leadership and management are good. Following the recent directorate re-structure, good strategic planning and direction drives the development of comprehensive and coherent learning provision. BMBC effectively promotes values aimed at developing an infrastructure to change local community culture, attitudes and values about learning. Learning is viewed as the prime driver for transformational change and all senior staff are actively involved and committed to this. BMBC is fully involved in well-developed, ambitious plans to provide good quality learning environments in the borough that meet learning needs throughout life.
16. Strong and effective partnerships promote responsive learning provision and effectively support the skills agenda. A very high priority is placed on collaborative working practices. BMBC works effectively with local learning and support providers from different sectors to identify need, share resources and plan provision. Clear progression

routes are established. A well-designed interactive CD-ROM helps learners make informed choices in guidance sessions.

17. Curriculum co-ordinators help establish a particularly effective team ethos in the management of provision. Some staff have extended roles that reflect whole service priorities well. Co-ordinators actively promote sharing good practice through joint work. Communication at all levels is good. Managers welcome contributions and intelligence from staff and service users. Learning champions are highly valued and well supported.
18. Commitment to staff development is high. All staff have a generous staff development allowance. A good balance and extensive range of development, with regular updates, is provided. Links from the observation of teaching and learning process to performance and development are established.
19. BMBC very effectively engages with hard to reach learners. Priority groups are explicitly identified in programme planning. BMBC effectively uses its NLDC funding to support the management of the neighbourhood learning net. Many successful neighbourhood learning net projects reach marginalised target groups in areas of high deprivation. Learning champions provide positive role models and provide close links to targeted groups. The service places a high priority on inclusiveness and entitlement to learning. Well planned, whole organisation skills for life development is successfully implemented in the largest sector subject areas and is to be extended to all areas. The five outcomes of *Every Child Matters* apply to all provision. Clear 'every learner matters' guidance supports staff to meet every learners' needs. Key enrolment information is available in the five main community languages. BMBC has made good progress in the implementation of its race equality and disability equality schemes. Much effective staff development in equality and diversity is provided. The service sets and monitors clear recruitment targets for different groups. However, targets for the recruitment of male learners remain significantly underachieved.
20. Generally, the collection, analysis and use of data and management information is satisfactory. Where targets are set they are regularly monitored. However, aspects of data is not systematically used to show impact or improvement. Some sector subject area tutors are not confident in the use of data and do not use it to manage their own improvements. The neighbourhood learning net managers' work is monitored each month. Quantitative information about the volume of activity is provided, but reports are not evaluative enough about its impact on individuals and communities.
21. RARPA processes are insufficiently well established. Inspectors saw wide variation in the quality of the process in different sector subject areas and this is reflected in the self-assessment report. Tutors vary considerably in their understanding and use of the process. No reference is made to RARPA processes and documentation in the otherwise very thorough staff handbook.

What learners like:

- Help from tutors to learn new things
- 'The class has made me confident at messing with computers at home'
- Helping each other out
- Increased confidence
- Treated as an equal
- Opportunity to take exams
- 'Helps me with my children'
- 'Has helped me have the courage to apply for a job'
- 'I am now able to help my children with their mathematics'
- 'Dyslexia support doesn't make me feel stupid'

What learners think could improve:

- More information on courses at other centres
- Noise levels in some venues
- More up-to-date computers and software at central library
- Lack of parking
- 'I don't understand which exams I'm taking'

Sector subject areas

Hospitality and catering

Good: Grade 2

Context

22. BMBC provides hospitality and catering courses in sugar craft and cake decorating, cookery, food safety at basic and intermediate levels, hygiene, health and safety in health and social care, health and safety in the workplace, healthier foods and special diets. Currently, 273 learners have enrolled on courses of which 3% are male, 3% had identified themselves as having a physical or learning difficulty and less than 1% is from minority ethnic backgrounds. Many learners are in receipt of fee remission. In 2006-07, 146 courses were delivered by two full-time and one part-time tutor across the borough. Courses in food safety and health and safety are accredited and represent 45% of the provision. Courses in sugar craft and cake decorating are non-accredited and represent 55% of the provision. Learners have the opportunity to work towards accreditation but currently do not choose to do so. Classes are available five days a week and on occasional Saturdays in response to demand from local employers.

Key strengths

- Very good retention
- Good achievement on accredited courses
- Good standards of work on cake decorating and sugar craft courses
- Successful partnership working

Key areas for improvement

- Insufficient action to improve literacy and numeracy within the curriculum
- Under-developed use of RARPA processes

Achievement and standards

23. Retention is good across the provision with 99% retention in 2006. Achievement of learners is good on most accredited courses in 2006-07 ranging from 89% to 100% with learners achieving work related qualifications that enable them to enhance their career progression. Standards of work on cake decorating and sugar craft classes are good and in some instances very good. In cake decorating and sugar craft, learners at every level produce good quality sugar flowers, decorated cakes and develop good technical craft skills. Learners who have been on course for four weeks are already able to create wired, spray flowers of a high standard. Learners progress onto highly complex and delicate flowers and detailed figures for wedding and celebration cakes using a wide range of sugar mediums. In these lessons there are high levels of enthusiasm and enjoyment with well motivated learners who take great pride in their achievement. In cookery classes, learners' skills development and understanding of nutritional issues is satisfactory with understanding of different commodities and recognition of quality points when shopping. Learners are better able to improve the health and diet of themselves and their families.

Quality of provision

24. The teaching of food preparation and sugar craft skills is satisfactory or better. There is no unsatisfactory teaching. In sugar craft and cake decorating tutors demonstrate high levels

of skills in shaping, moulding, colouring and the use of tools and techniques. Individual coaching is effective and enables learners to quickly acquire and enhance their skills further still. Learners acquire skills in food hygiene, safe use of knives and a good awareness of nutrition and healthy eating. Effective use is made by some tutors of ICT that enhances learning. However, in some classes, tutors dominate activities too much and do not carry out sufficient checks on learners' understanding or learning. In non-accredited provision RARPA is under-developed. Tutors do not use initial assessment sufficiently well to identify prior attainment and skills, or to agree detailed individual learning plans. The development of the individual learning plan based upon initial skills assessment and learning styles analysis is used by all tutors but does not impact on the delivery of learning. Personalisation of learning and target-setting is limited.

25. BMBC has developed its provision to meet the local strategic objectives aimed at addressing the low skill levels of adults and the borough-wide healthy eating agenda. Provision is well targeted to meet these specific needs and is widely accessible across the borough in a range of community venues and local training centres although the range of courses available is somewhat limited. Staff consult effectively with neighbourhood partnerships, local employers, community groups and schools to develop and signpost new courses. The service works well in collaboration with local schools to support schools achieving the healthy schools award and in providing for accredited food safety and hygiene. Useful healthy eating courses are aimed at parents and low income learners and provision to meet the needs of former offenders while providing low cost meals for local pensioners.
26. Support for learners with physical disabilities is satisfactory with a wide range of adaptive equipment available. Access is good for those with a mobility disability. However, action to improve literacy and numeracy within the curriculum is insufficient and no attempt is made to use naturally occurring evidence for skills for life development. Not all tutors understand the value of skills for life delivery within the provision or refer learners within the service for additional guidance and support. Tutors are unaware of learners who are accessing basic literacy and numeracy within the service. Referral to additional literacy and numeracy support across the provision is insufficient and development of skills for life within the curriculum is limited. Skills for life needs of former offenders on basic cookery courses are not identified. Cross partnership working to ascertain literacy and numeracy prior attainment is not well established. Resources are satisfactory and learners have good access to a range of equipment and tools in most centres. Accommodation is generally satisfactory and good in some venues. Risk assessments of venues are satisfactory. Initial advice and guidance is satisfactory. Learning aims are well used in the curriculum to share the progression routes from first steps onto vocational courses with partners. This supports partners to target hard to reach learners to increase the skills levels of the borough and provide greater employability skills and improved economic prospects.

Leadership and management

27. Curriculum management is satisfactory. A good range of staff development activities focus on quality improvement and qualification updating. Observation of teaching and learning are established and action points are followed up. However focus on learning and the measurement and recording of learning outcomes is insufficient. Communications are effective if informal and staff are well supported by the curriculum manager. The self-assessment process involves all the team to support findings and agree the development plan. Quality assurance is thorough and the sharing of good practice is developing well within the team. Verification and moderation processes are satisfactory. Health and safety

is dealt with effectively with well established processes. Many findings of the self-assessment report are consistent with the findings of inspection. However, recognition of the extent of action required to improve literacy and numeracy within the curriculum is insufficient.

Arts, media and publishing

Outstanding: Grade 1

Context

28. BMBC provides courses in painting, drawing, mixed media, oil painting, paper crafts, textiles, tailoring, digital photography, stained glass and woodwork. In 2006-2007, there were 664 learners in this area of learning. In the week of inspection there were 243 learners, of whom 31% were male. Some 21% of learners are aged over 60 years old, and 64% are aged between 30 and 60. Learning takes place in 40 centres around the borough, during the daytime and evenings. These centres include school buildings, church buildings, resource centres, community centres and village halls. Courses range from two hour taster sessions to year-long accredited courses. In the week of inspection the only accredited course was City and Guilds level two Tailoring. Currently nine tutors deliver provision, of whom two are full-time. It is managed by a curriculum co-ordinator who has a wider remit with responsibility for extended services through schools as well as wider family learning.

Key strengths

- Good achievement in accredited and non-accredited courses
- High standard of learners' work
- Much well paced teaching that motivates learners
- Excellent use of RARPA to inform teaching and learning
- Highly responsive provision that meets community needs
- Good range of staff development opportunities
- Particularly effective management of curriculum area

Key areas for improvement

- Insufficient celebration of learners' work

Achievement and standards

29. Achievement in both accredited and non-accredited courses is good, with 94% achievement on non-accredited and 100% achievement on accredited courses. Learners' work is of a high standard, especially in tailoring, stained glass, paper crafts and digital photography. In a digital photography class, a learner was accepting commissions for large manipulated images of scooters on canvas, and in a stained glass class, a learner had made a nativity set for her child's school Christmas display. In tailoring, learners had made jackets and skirts which were finished to a professional standard. Learners are enthusiastic and committed to their classes, often doing extra work outside sessions to support and practise their skills. They are highly motivated and contribute positively to the group. Learners have raised levels of self-confidence and make good progress. The good quality work produced is not sufficiently celebrated or exhibited around Barnsley. Attendance during the week of inspection was good at 83%.

Quality of provision

30. Teaching is well-paced and motivates learners. Lessons are well planned, and packed with exciting and challenging activities. Tutors are knowledgeable and enthusiastic, and prepare well for their classes with rooms set out with a wealth of resources. They provide inspiring examples and are generous in sharing their specialist knowledge and details of specialist suppliers. Good mini demonstrations take place and individual tuition is good. Complex technical processes are broken down into easily understood processes which are demonstrated and explained well to the learners. When learners work on their individual tasks tutors are careful to check their progress and work effectively with them. Positive encouragement is offered and corrections dealt with accurately. Well designed handouts are packed with information to consolidate learning and become a useful resource for learners. Learners are actively engaged and focused on their studies. They are keen and enthusiastic and ask questions to clarify their understanding. Learners work positively together and learn from each other. Other learners provide good peer support, and there is a good atmosphere of collaborative learning. Additional learning support is available if necessary.

31. Teaching and learning are informed by the excellent use of RARPA. Tutors have a thorough understanding of initial, formative and summative assessment and learners' progress is measured accurately. They implement the different stages of assessment with detailed monitoring of learners' progress on forms that they have all collaborated with

each other to produce especially for their area of learning. Individualised learning plans with agreed targets are monitored closely and reviewed at different stages of the course. Learners are positive about using their learning diaries, and enjoy recording their progress.

32. The provision is highly responsive, meeting community needs and playing a key role in extended services. Classes are held in centres in the heart of the community, and there are wider family learning workshops in schools. These involve parents, including fathers, in activities with their children such as making masks or model making. Three day tasters and publicity events such as Learning at Work Days attract new learners.

Leadership and management

33. Management of the curriculum area is particularly effective. Following the recent restructure, management of change is good, with close team working and communication. The manager works effectively with a clear purpose. Meetings take place every fortnight, and there is much informal contact as well as extensive sharing of good practice. All the tutors work closely together as a team with a commitment to raising achievement and widening participation. They feel valued and are well supported by management. This support has been invaluable, especially in the detailed and established implementation of the five stage assessment process. Extensive training has taken place to establish the assessment process and clarify course outlines and learning outcomes. Curriculum managers are encouraged to share information at regular meetings. Communication between strategic and operational level staff is good. Internal communications are good and staff at all levels feel valued and contribute to a positive ethos for improvement, with teamwork and a learner-centred approach.
34. A good range of staff development opportunities is available to all tutors. All tutors have teaching qualifications. They have four weeks professional training every year, which has proved to be invaluable in allowing sufficient time to fully understand and establish the detailed RARPA processes. They can also enrol without charge on any course offered by Barnsley MBC, and one tutor is improving her new information technology (IT) skills by taking a course on using the internet for research. The improvement in IT skills by all tutors following staff development opportunities has led to the production of improved resources for learners such as illustrated worksheets of outstanding quality and well designed certificates of achievements for learners, awarded at the annual celebration of success. The observation of teaching and learning system is supportive in improving the performance of tutors. It is carried out by a subject specialist, and the process is valued by tutors. All tutors are seen every year. However, grades do not always match the lesson notes. Support needs are effectively dealt with when identified.

Languages, literature and culture

Good: Grade 2

Context

35. BMBC provides courses in French, German, Spanish, Italian, Croatian, Chinese (Cantonese), British sign language (BSL) and Braille. At the time of inspection, one course in Spanish for families was available at a local primary school. Currently 301 learners are enrolled on 53 courses at 21 centres and 58% of courses take place during the day. Language courses do not lead to a qualification and are available at beginner and intermediate level and also at advanced level in French. Most foreign language courses are of ten weeks duration. Courses in BSL lead to a qualification at level 1 or 2 and last for 36 weeks.

Key strengths

- Good achievement of personal learning goals
- Much good teaching
- Good development of provision in response to local demand
- Good range of staff development opportunities
- Good management of the provision

Key areas for improvement

- Insufficient use of the foreign language by learners
- Insufficiently developed initial assessment process

Achievement and standards

36. Achievement of personal learning goals is good. Learners are studying and developing good skills for various reasons and are well motivated. In a BSL class three learners were developing useful skills to improve their communication with a friend with hearing impairment. They had increased awareness of the difficulties facing people with

disabilities and were enabling their friend to participate more fully socially and to communicate more effectively. Learners develop confidence in using other languages and feel that they have a greater understanding of the culture. Attainment is variable but generally satisfactory. During the week of inspection attendance was 80%. Retention and achievement in non-accredited courses is satisfactory. In 2006-07 retention was at 90.8% and achievement against learning aims was 95.3%. In 2006-07 only 50% of learners achieved a qualification in BSL at level 2, compared with 53% nationally. These learners represent a very small proportion of the learners in the area at just over 2% of the provision.

Quality of provision

37. Teaching is good in modern foreign languages and BSL. During inspection 57% of lessons observed were good including one outstanding session. Lessons are well planned and well structured. Tutors emphasise good pronunciation and use consistent but sensitive correction of pronunciation errors and of syntax. Many tutors are adept at eliciting self-correction from learners. In the better classes tutors make good use of a wide range of activities to develop and extend learning and to address different learning styles with a good level of challenge and pace.
38. The development of provision in response to local demand is good. Courses are available in six languages, Braille and BSL. Classes take place in a wide range of community venues. BMBC provide short free courses and a high level of learners then progress on to longer beginners courses. Some 16% of learners from taster courses enrolled on to subsequent beginners courses and 20% of learners were new to the service. There is a strong partnership with the neighbourhood learning net who work closely with communities to raise awareness of learning opportunities and to identify local need. The service is very responsive to learner demand and will set up new courses in local areas following requests from learners. In 2006, the service introduced a new curriculum offer with no requirement to take a qualification. Early in 2007 a group of learners travelled to Spain as part of an international project that the service co-ordinates on behalf of local partners.
39. Support for learners is satisfactory. The curriculum co-ordinator and tutors will interview learners in person and by telephone to help them select the most appropriate course for their level. Adaptive equipment is available for those with a declared need. However, learners do not have satisfactory access to pre-course information.
40. Learners do not make sufficient use of the foreign language even for basic classroom interactions despite tutors providing activities. Many learners lack confidence and resort to reading from a prepared script. In many cases learners lapse into English in spite of encouragement from the tutor. These learners are often hesitant in their delivery and manipulation of the language, have poor pronunciation and a limited vocabulary.
41. The initial assessment process is insufficiently developed in some classes. There is little consistency as to what skills are assessed. In some classes tutors assess writing and comprehension skills, in others listening, reading and speaking skills. In some classes, no initial assessment takes place. Results are not recorded to help with planning to meet identified needs, nor do tutors use the results systematically to set specific individual learning targets linked to the skills.

Leadership and management

42. A good range of staff development opportunities are available, both generic and subject specific. Activities are linked to service and national priorities. Useful staff development sessions take place on four weeks during the year and attract a payment. Tutors use these events and regular meetings to share good practice.
43. The provision is well managed. The manager consults widely with staff and other managers to bring about improvements. There is a good team ethos. Regular, useful and informal meetings are held on an individual basis with tutors to review the progress of courses. Tutors have good access to a range of resources including technical equipment, laptops and data projectors for use in community venues. Tutor and learner feedback is collected and used to improve provision and to inform the self-assessment process. The co-ordinator also meets with tutors to discuss their courses and propose changes. For example venues have been changed in response to learner and tutor feedback. BMBC sets various well considered targets across the provision. The co-ordinator monitors these and uses them to plan future provision. The co-ordinator has an effective cross-service role with a brief to promote international development linked to BMBC's involvement with a European project.
44. The observation of teaching and learning reports do not focus sufficiently on either the learning or the attainment of learners. An action plan is drawn up, but it is not time-bound or monitored.

Literacy, numeracy and English for speakers of other languages

Outstanding: Grade 1

Context

45. At the time of the inspection, 401 learners were enrolled on literacy, numeracy and ESOL programmes. BMBC offers classes at adult education centres and at 18 community venues throughout the area. Learning sessions offer teaching and learning in the context of work, everyday life, community settings and citizenship. All learners work to achieve the learning goals agreed with them at the start of their programme and are working towards nationally recognised qualifications. Learners now work towards qualifications in literacy, numeracy and ESOL.

Key strengths

- Good retention and achievement
- Very good development of skills
- Excellent teaching and learning
- Effective assessment process to inform planning of learning
- Good range of courses to meet community needs
- Good advice and guidance
- Excellent management of provision

Key areas for improvement

- Noisy accommodation at one centre

Achievement and standards

46. Retention and achievement are good at 83% and 94% respectively. Attendance is good at 87%. Development of skills is very good. Learners demonstrate high levels of language and mathematical concepts and skills in all classes observed. Learners' work is particularly well marked in files carefully organised into learning areas. All work is routinely promptly marked with very constructive feedback including areas for development. Learners actively use these skills to help their children and to enable them to find work.

Quality of provision

47. Teaching and learning are excellent. Classes are lively with challenging tasks to enable learners to demonstrate new skills effectively. Learners work at a pace which enables them to develop new skills. Teachers use a variety of styles and methods to challenge learning. A range of well prepared activities and resources motivates learners. Teachers have a good understanding of learners' difficulties in grasping concepts. They provide good explanations and adapt their teaching methods to help learners fully understand the

concepts and methods they are learning. Learner activity includes individual, paired, small group and whole class activities. Teachers are skilled at developing learners' skills and plan lessons around the individual needs of learners as well as the course criteria. The use of volunteers by tutors is well planned and thorough. Volunteers supply very effective individual support and are closely monitored by teachers. In one numeracy class learners were learning a new subject through the use of a mind map enabling them to explore their understanding and use of the numeracy terms in a range of ways.

48. An effective assessment process informs planning for learning. Learners undertake a detailed interview which looks at previous education and work history, followed by an initial assessment. Learners are then allocated to classes where over a period of three weeks they undertake a diagnostic assessment. A detailed individual learning plan is devised from these results. Construction of individual learning plan targets are written in plain English and are focused on learners' needs and aspirations. The plan is a working document where learners routinely record their learning and targets achieved. Review of learning takes place termly, however, as learners complete their targets these are signed off and new targets set. They receive detailed and accurate feedback on their progress towards their learning goals. Learners work is assessed and constructive feedback given in every session. Homework is an integral part of the course and is routinely assessed.
49. A good range of courses meets the needs of communities. Courses are offered in 18 venues throughout the borough. BMBC have identified the need to site classes in areas where learners traditionally would not be engaged in learning and is now beginning to integrate communities through learning. This is a key target for BMBC. Advice and guidance are good. The neighbourhood learning net, Jobcentre Plus and schools routinely refer learners to BMBC. Learners are given good quality advice and guidance on the courses they undertake. During their course learners are well supported and guided by their tutors. The need for additional support is identified at interview and procedures for support in classes arranged. Peer support is good and learners routinely advise each other on the location of venues and the support available. The range of specialist equipment is very good. Coloured screens, hearing loops and adaptive computer equipment are available for learners with identified needs. Support for learners is satisfactory. Tutors show knowledge and understanding of learners' strengths and weaknesses and support them accordingly. Any absences are followed up.

Leadership and management

50. Management of the provision is excellent. Strategic direction is strong, with local plans that effectively implement national and local strategies. Highly qualified, specialist staff are committed to developing the learner journey. Progression between levels is recorded and is used to develop programmes. Staff successfully promote equality and diversity and give learners good opportunities to develop their potential. Many learning activities promote cultural awareness effectively. A wide range of good quality multi-cultural resources have been developed and are routinely shared with teaching staff across all curriculum areas. Professional and development opportunities are available and well used by all staff. All staff undergo teaching and learning observations which result in timely action plans. New members of staff are mentored. Peer observations routinely take place.
51. A strong and enthusiastic team work closely together to take the provision forward. Communication is good. All staff can be contacted by email but formal and informal team meetings take place each week. Sharing of good practice is routinely an agenda item on staff meetings. Internal moderation is routinely planned and information disseminated to

all tutors. All staff were fully involved in the self-assessment process. The self-assessment report has provided a clearer focus on development of the provision at all levels through the quality improvement process.

52. The curriculum manager identified the need to improve attendance and the area is now piloting a method of monitoring attendance. Attendance is beginning to improve and is having an impact on course delivery. Data is analysed but is not routinely disseminated to all tutors to enable them to monitor the provision. A strong skills for life strategy is starting to impact on all curriculum areas. Specialist tutors have worked with some curriculum areas to ensure that the literacy and numeracy needs of learners are incorporated within the curriculum. However, the whole organisation approach to skills for life for BMBC is yet to be implemented. Accommodation in most venues is satisfactory. However, accommodation in one centre is noisy. Tutors have to compete with other staff in a shared area which is having an impact on the learners, who say they find concentration difficult.

Independent living and leisure skills

Good: Grade 2

Context

53. BMBC provides courses for 330 learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. Accredited courses are available for 220 learners who are working towards an entry level qualification in personal progression through practical life or work skills. Subjects offered include cookery, food hygiene, ICT, digital photography, independent living, literacy and numeracy, and arts and crafts. Currently 110 learners follow similar courses but these are

not accredited. Courses are held during the day in 14 community venues. Most courses last for 36 weeks and most learners attend for two hours a week. Classes are taught by four full-time and two part-time tutors, assisted by an educational support worker and managed by a curriculum co-ordinator.

Key strengths

- Good retention and attendance
- Good success rates in non-accredited provision
- Good development of practical skills
- Well-planned provision to widen participation
- Good range of opportunities for staff development

Key areas for improvement

- Insufficient action to introduce new qualifications
- Insufficient analysis and use of performance data for quality improvements

Achievement and standards

54. Retention and attendance are good. In 2006-07 retention of learners on programmes was 93%. Attendance since the start of the term ranges from 80 to 100%. This is particularly significant as most learners travel to classes independently. Around 93% of learners on non-accredited courses successfully completed courses and achieved their learning goals in 2006-07. Success rates on accredited provision are 63% so far and a further 30% of learners are continuing towards their learning goals and qualification this year.
55. In practical classes learners show good skills acquisition and background knowledge. For example, they show good application of health and safety practices and food hygiene principles in cookery classes. Learners in ICT demonstrate a good use of software packages and produce good quality presentations. Learners fully participate in classes, are responsive to tutors and work well together.

Quality of provision

56. The range of courses on offer is well-matched to community and learner needs. The service adopts an inclusive approach to identifying subjects for the future curriculum year. Consultation with social services, external agencies and carers is effectively combined with learners' feedback and tutor course evaluation. A wide range of taster sessions are offered and these are successful in attracting and retaining learners who have not previously been engaged in learning. In 2006-07, 56% of learners from taster sessions enrolled on courses. This rose to 77% in the current year. Opportunities for learners to progress within the discrete learning difficulties and disabilities provision and also to transfer into mainstream classes are good.
57. Teaching and learning are satisfactory overall. No inadequate teaching was observed during inspection. The better sessions are lively and engaging. Tutors demonstrate good group management and use questioning effectively to involve all learners. In weaker

sessions tutors use insufficiently varied teaching and learning strategies. A few tutors use techniques that are not appropriate for the level and abilities of learners.

58. Accommodation and resources are satisfactory. Classes are held in a range of accessible community venues. All venues provide an acceptable standard of accommodation for teaching and learning. An appropriate range of sensory and tactile resources is available for use with learners with profound and multiple learning difficulties and disabilities.
59. Support for learners is satisfactory. Most classes contain a small number of learners allowing a good tutor to learner ratio. An educational support worker gives appropriate support in some classes. Carers and signers are well used and involved in classes. However, in some larger classes not enough support is available. Teaching and learning activities are restricted. Literacy, language and numeracy are not well integrated with all sessions. Opportunities to extend learners skills development in these areas are missed. Information, advice and guidance are effective during taster sessions to place learners on appropriate courses. Ongoing informal guidance is satisfactorily provided by tutors throughout courses.

Leadership and management

60. Staff attend a wide range of in-house and external training and development activities. Much of this is successful in developing their knowledge and skills in areas specific to learning difficulties, disability, access and inclusion. In addition tutors have a weekly time allocation for planning, preparation and development of their courses. Staff have satisfactory qualifications and experience in teaching adults with learning difficulties and/or disabilities.
61. Tutors have good access to a supportive curriculum manager. Communication within the team through regular meetings is good. Agendas for these meetings are wide ranging and help to ensure that staff are well informed. The learning difficulty and disability team provide a highly inclusive learning environment. With guidance, learners set their own effective ground rules at the start of their courses which help to ensure that rights and responsibilities are respected. Tutors are appropriately involved in self-assessment. Focus on quality improvement through peer review activities and sharing practice between tutors is very good. Feedback from learners and carers is regularly sought, analysed and used to improve the curriculum offer. Some observations of teaching and learning are accurate in their judgements and grades but a few are graded too highly. The self-assessment report is mainly accurate in identifying key strengths and areas for improvement.
62. Insufficient action has been taken to introduce a new qualification for 2007-08. In addition, two tutors are on long-term sick leave. The quality of teaching and learning has been disrupted this term. The qualification criteria are not yet used to initially establish learners' starting points and levels of ability. Ongoing assessment of learners' progress towards the qualification is insufficient. In 2006-07 tutors attended training to improve target-setting in learning plans and some improvements were made. In the current year the lack of a qualification framework as a basis for learning plans has resulted in too much variation between tutors in the quality of targets. Learners are unaware of the requirements of the qualification and, for most, their targets are insufficiently specific or incremental.
63. Data is routinely and regularly collected on retention and achievement, however, the data is not sufficiently analysed or interrogated. Success rates are not well understood and examination of retention and achievement data to identify trends or variations by, for

instance course, tutor, support needs, location or ethnicity category is insufficient.
Information on progression is collected but little analysis at course level takes place.