

The Libraries and Community Learning 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:

- Early years and playwork
- Construction crafts
- Information and communication technology
- Classical and modern foreign languages
- Family learning

Inspectors also examined evidence from other subject sector areas, which were not reported on separately, to support judgements on achievement and standards, quality of provision and leadership and management.

Description of the provider

1. The Libraries and Community Learning Service (L&CLS) which operates within the Darlington Borough Council's children services directorate is contracted by the north east LSC to annually provide training for around 70 work-based learners and 1,200 adults. Work-based provision is offered in early years and playwork, motor vehicle, construction crafts, business, administration and law, and employability training. The Service offers adult provision in information and communication technology (ICT), classical and modern foreign languages and culture, arts, media and publishing and family learning. Since September 2007, the service has engaged 423 adult learners and has had 461 enrolments. Currently 101 learners are on courses in adult and community learning (ACL) and 66 learners are on work-based learning. The service has subcontracted aspects of its early years and playwork training to Stockton Riverside College, but these arrangements are being wound down. During this inspection five sector subject areas were inspected and graded, although aspects of the other sector subject areas which were not inspected influenced the main findings judgements.
2. The Service's restructuring was concluded in September 2007. In this structure the managers work across generic functions. Some 30 part-time and three full-time tutors provide the adult courses and eight staff are involved in work-based learning. The community learning manager oversees the work-based learning provision, aspects of the adult provision and the foundation programmes. The quality and performance manager oversees the quality improvement activities.
3. Darlington has a minority ethnic population of 2.1% which is well below the national average of 9.1%. Darlington ranks 90th out of 354 authorities in England on the index of multiple deprivation index 2004. Darlington's unemployment rate is marginally lower than Tees Valley's but higher than the national rate, with a significant number of the businesses who provide relatively low-paid employment. In 2007, the proportion of school leavers in Darlington achieving five or more GCSEs at grades A-C was 59.5% which is marginally below the national averages.

Summary of grades awarded

| | |
|------------------------------|-----------------------|
| Adult and community learning | Good: Grade 2 |
| Work-based learning | Satisfactory: Grade 3 |
| Capacity to improve | Satisfactory: Grade 3 |
| Achievement and standards | Good: Grade 2 |
| Adult and community learning | Good: Grade 2 |
| Work-based learning | Satisfactory: Grade 3 |
| Quality of provision | Satisfactory: Grade 3 |
| Adult and community learning | Satisfactory: Grade 3 |
| Work-based learning | Good: Grade 2 |
| Leadership and management | Good: Grade 2 |
| Adult and community learning | Good: Grade 2 |
| Work-based learning | Good: Grade 2 |
| Equality of opportunity | Good: Grade 2 |

Sector subject areas

| | |
|--|-----------------------|
| Early years and playwork | Good: Grade 2 |
| Construction crafts | Satisfactory: Grade 3 |
| Information and communication technology | Good: Grade 2 |
| Classical and modern foreign languages | Good: Grade 2 |
| Family learning | Good: Grade 2 |

Overall judgement

Effectiveness of provision

Good: Grade 2

Adult and community learning
Work-based learning

Contributory grade: Good: Grade 2
Contributory grade: Satisfactory: Grade 3

4. The overall effectiveness of the provision is good. The quality of provision in early years and playwork, ICT, classical and modern foreign languages and family learning is good. Success rates and achievement rates for ACL learners are good, as are the ICT learners' attainments. The apprentices' success rates are around the national averages, although it has significantly declined since the previous inspection. All learners enjoy their studies and gain confidence in enhancing their lives and in being more active within their communities. Learners on family learning provision gain confidence and skills to help their children in their school work.
5. Many learners who have had little successful experience of schooling and are often anxious about engaging with education and training are supported well to stay on their courses and achieve. In construction crafts the service uses information from learner interviews, diagnostic testing and the schools to plan the support the learners require. In ICT learners who have experienced recent misfortune or hardship are sensitively supported. In family learning the intensive support project has enabled isolated and hard to reach learners to receive regular home tuition.
6. Leadership and management are good. The Service has been effective in managing the merger of the library and the adult community services well, which has contributed significantly to the performance of the Service. Curriculum planning is very effective with a clear focus on the community, LSC and council's priorities. Good partnership working has provided effective provision for many learners. The Service's approach to removing barriers to inclusion is very effective and is central to the culture of the organisation.
7. The range of programmes to meet learners' needs and interests is satisfactory with some good features. L&CLS has marginally increased the number of learners who access its provision despite the reduction in funding. Progression opportunities are not sufficiently promoted and the course literature does not clearly provide information about the next step in learning.

Capacity to improve

Satisfactory: Grade 3

8. The Services' capacity to improve is satisfactory. L&CLS has taken satisfactory actions to maintain the quality of the provision since the previous inspection. A major restructure of the Service has taken place and many staff are in new or revised roles. Integration of work-based learning, ACL and family learning programmes has been achieved and staff now function across remits rather than in any single sector subject area. The quality systems have also undergone a radical review and systematic reorganisation. A quality improvement steering group manages the revised quality framework. All staff contribute

to self-assessment. It is too early since the re-organisation to judge the full impact of these changes.

9. The self-assessment process is good. The process is co-ordinated well and engages the views of staff, learners and a number of stakeholders. The self-assessment report produced in November 2007 was the second report combining the self-assessment of ACL and work-based provision. The report is self-critical and analytical and uses the learner performance information well. Inspection findings very closely matched the self-assessment's judgements, and the inspection confirmed most of the grades. The Service over-estimated its capacity to improve and underestimated the strength of its leadership and management. The self-assessment report is supported by a satisfactory development plan, which identifies the priorities for improvements, but some of its targets are not sufficiently challenging.

Key strengths

- Good development of learners' skills
- Good support for learners
- Good planning in work-based learning
- Good management of change
- Good strategic management and curriculum planning
- Very good partnership working
- Good approach to equality and diversity

Key areas for improvement

- Insufficiently detailed development plans
- Declining apprentices success rates

Main findings

Achievement and standards

Good: Grade 2

Adult and community learning
Work-based learning

Contributory grade: Good: Grade 2
Contributory grade: Satisfactory: Grade 3

10. Achievement and standards are good. In ACL, retention rates on non-accredited courses and success rates on accredited programmes are high. Many learners who start on ICT courses with little experience of computing have high levels of attainment and can competently use the computer packages appropriate to the level of their courses. Learners on family learning courses improve their literacy and numeracy skills and can help their children more effectively with their homework. Achievement of learners studying modern foreign languages has been consistently high over time. Learners' attendance rates are often good at over 90%.
11. Overall success rates for work-based learners are satisfactory. Since 2004-05, 102 apprentices and 28 advanced apprentices have received training on a range of programmes. Advanced apprentices overall success rates declined from 88% in 2004-05 to 57% in 2005-06, but are now good at 77%, some 20% above the national averages. Although the apprentices' success rates are around the national average at 62%, they have declined by around 25% since 2004-05.
12. All learners' develop a wide range of personal and employment skills, with some who progress to paid or unpaid employment. The standard of learners' work is often satisfactory or better.

Quality of provision

Satisfactory: Grade 3

Adult and community learning
Work-based learning

Contributory grade: Satisfactory: Grade 3
Contributory grade: Good: Grade 2

13. All teaching observed is satisfactory or better. Planning is good in work-based learning and teaching and learning are broadly satisfactory in ACL. In the better classes, lessons are well planned, structured and paced. Learning is checked and personalised to learners' needs and interests, making effective use of a range of resources. Tutors are informative, helpful and skilful in building confidence and encouraging independent problem-solving. Some tutors use individual learning targets well to inform planning for teaching and learning. Although most lesson planning is at least satisfactory, use of the generic lesson plan sometimes lacks sufficient detail about the specific context of teaching. Differentiation takes place in practice but is rarely recorded. Individual coaching is generally effective, but whole class teaching sometimes lacks impact. Practical skills are not always demonstrated sufficiently. Tutors have been trained to use interactive whiteboards, but do not always use them to enrich and enhance their teaching with visual stimuli. Individual learning plans are fit for purpose in ACL. Learners frequently set

measurable targets but these are not always updated during reviews. In ICT the quality of learner progress and achievement records is inconsistent.

14. The response to community needs is satisfactory with a few good aspects. The Service's funding from the LSC has significantly declined over recent years, however, the Service has marginally increased its learner numbers over the same period. L&CLS deliberately offers its provision only in the venues which are in the deprived communities, with around 31% of its learners from these communities. The service operates a concession fee policy for learners who do not receive any benefits, and uses this fee to offer free provision for learners who receive social financial assistance. Information for learners in work-based learning is generally comprehensive, but in ACL course information is not detailed enough. Most of the Service's provision is at entry level and level 1. L&CLS has produced course information booklets which indicate progression opportunities with other providers, but the progression routes are not sufficiently promoted, and most course information sheets do not explain the progression opportunities in a clear and accessible language.
15. Good support for learners is a strong feature of each graded sector subject area. In work-based learning, well-qualified staff provide good information, advice and guidance and mentoring arrangements. Good links with schools promote effective transition for young people. Vulnerable learners stay in learning when they may otherwise leave. In ACL well planned support enables learners with disabilities to learn successfully. The service provides all consumable art materials. In work-based learning additional support for literacy, numeracy and key skills is good and one learner receives specialist dyslexia support. However, the strategy for embedding literacy and numeracy support into ACL provision is underdeveloped.

Leadership and management

Good: Grade 2

Adult and community learning

Contributory grade: Grade 2

Work-based learning

Contributory grade: Grade 2

Equality of opportunity

Contributory grade: Grade 2

16. Good management of change has very significantly contributed to the performance of the Service. Senior managers at L&CLS have considered, negotiated and planned well the changes in both the staffing structure and organisation to bring together the services of the libraries and the community learning. Staff at all levels are kept well informed about the changes and how they are effected by these changes. Regular briefings have encouraged staff to engage in the decision-making process about the changes and developments and their views are sought and incorporated into decisions. More staff are included in senior management team meetings to allow them to contribute more effectively to the decision-making process. The managers have an 'open door' management style, contributing significantly to the free flow of information. Staff have a good understanding of the vision and strategic direction of the Service. Support for staff in new management roles is good.
17. The strategic management and curriculum planning is very effective and is focused on community, LSC and council priorities. Many individual wards in Darlington rank very highly in the national scales of deprivation rating and the provision is reported to have

significantly contributed to the communities' development and capacity by a number of stakeholders. Managers consider the financial aspects of running the programmes well, and work hard to ensure that the programmes run within the available funding. Managers take staffing decisions to build on the familiarity and trust between the learners and the tutors.

18. L&CLS has well established and effective arrangements to improve staff performance and develop their knowledge, competency and skills. Appraisal for all staff, including the hourly-paid tutors is thorough. The observation of teaching and learning process is effectively used to plan and identifying further development needs. L&CLS provides good support to staff to access identified training. A flexible approach to working time, as well as financial contributions, enables staff to access training most convenient to all involved. All part-time staff receive a standard payment rate to attend both in-service training and staff meetings. All staff attend specific sessions to contribute to self-assessment activities.
19. Good partnership working has provided efficient and effective provision for many learners. The partners include local colleges, other adult education services and a wide range of local providers and community groups. Good support is offered to partners to enable courses and programmes to be provided in targeted communities. For example the Service has provided training and quality assurance arrangements for the Youth Service. The Service staff provide inspiration and encouragement to partner providers and voluntary groups.
20. The approach of the Service to equality and diversity is good. Equality and taking effective actions to remove barriers to inclusion is central to many aspects of the work of the Service and its staff. L&CLS uses the council's equality of opportunity policies and procedures, which meet level 3 of the equality standard for local government, to define and set its operational policies and its provision plan. The Service successfully engages with communities with complex and multiple barriers to social inclusion. For example L&CLS prioritises meeting the needs of learners with deprived backgrounds rather than cancelling classes with low learner numbers. A high proportion of learners are entitled to fee remissions. A detailed disability equality scheme is in place and is closely aligned to the Disability Discrimination Act, 2005 legislation.
21. The collation and use of learner performance information is satisfactory and has further improved since the previous inspection. The arrangements for recognising and recording progress and achievement on non-accredited provision are reliable and satisfactory, although it has not been further developed since the previous inspection, when it was good.
22. The quality systems to support improvement are satisfactory. A new and fully integrated quality framework incorporates work-based learning and ACL programmes into a set of common policies and procedures. All aspects of quality are co-ordinated by a team which is chaired by a manager. Roles and responsibilities of staff in implementing the development plan are clear and well understood. The system for the observation of teaching and learning is well established. Good use is made of collaboration with a local college to co-observe and standardise the process. The Service has an effective policy to recruit staff with teaching qualifications and to support staff training to gain recognised qualified teacher status.

23. The self-assessment process is thorough and well managed. The report includes the views of staff, learners and a number of stakeholders. The inspection findings very closely matched the judgements of the self-assessment report and the inspection confirmed most of the grades. The self-assessment report is supported by a satisfactory development plan, which identifies areas for improvements, although some of the targets set are not sufficiently challenging.
24. The L&CLS development plans lack sufficient detail, for example in how some of the targets are to be achieved. Some of the objectives are not sufficiently measurable.

What learners like:

- The contact with people of different ages and backgrounds
- 'I have gained confidence'
- 'I've learnt more mathematics in three months here than in three years at school'
- 'I haven't felt this confident and happy for some time'
- 'We are able to voice our opinions and they do take them on board'

What learners think could improve:

- 'I would like the next level of the course to be available as I want to progress'
- 'Better course descriptions' (particularly for ACL courses)
- 'Better workshop rooms and equipment' (in engineering and joinery)

Sector Subject Areas

Early years and playwork

Good: Grade 2

Context

25. Currently 15 learners are enrolled on early years and playwork courses of whom six are advanced apprentices working towards national vocational qualification (NVQ) level 3, seven are apprentices and two are on an entry to employment (E2E) programme. All advanced apprentices are employed full-time in nurseries and have work-based assessors and five attend theory training in a local college one day each week. All apprentices are in placements for four days a week and attend training in knowledge and essential skills one day a week at the centre. The trainer, who is also their assessor, reviews their progress every 12 weeks or more frequently. The quality of assessments is monitored by two internal verifiers.

Strengths

- High apprenticeship success rates
- Good development of professional skills and knowledge
- Particularly effective support for learning

Areas for improvement

- Insufficient monitoring of advanced apprentices' progress

Achievement and standards

26. Success rates for apprentices are high. All apprentices enrolled since 2004 have achieved their frameworks and 100% completed within the expected timescale in the last two years. Apprentices on programme at the time of inspection are making good progress towards achieving their technical certificates and NVQs. All apprentices who have completed their programmes have achieved key skills in application of number, communications and ICT. Learner progress from level 2 to employment as an advanced apprentice is good.

27. All learners are developing good professional skills and knowledge. Employers recognise the increase in learners' confidence and ability to communicate effectively. Learners successfully relate information gained in theory sessions to their practical work. During training they use experience from the workplace as the starting point for further learning. NVQ portfolios are well organised and apprentices understand well what they have achieved and how evidence collected relates to the NVQ standards. Written evidence of learners' knowledge and understanding is of a particularly high standard. All apprentices research information carefully from a range of sources, provide detailed information and use a good range of effective presentation skills.

Quality of provision

28. Advanced apprentices' progress is not sufficiently monitored and only one of the three learners enrolled in 2006-07 achieved a framework in the expected time. L&CLS has

decided to discontinue its subcontracting arrangements with the college for the training of any future advanced apprentices, but to continue with the contract for the existing three advanced apprentices. Action has been taken more recently to increase the rate of progress monitoring of these learners, however, these arrangements are not fully established.

29. The range of programmes to meet the needs and interests of learners is satisfactory. In 2007, the E2E programme was added to apprenticeships at level 2 and 3 to extend the range of training. Apprentices can now start their frameworks at any time throughout the year and it is planned for advanced apprentices to be able to do this from September 2008. Learners take additional qualifications that include paediatric, first aid and basic food hygiene. Visiting experts in such subjects such as signing contribute to theory sessions.
30. Support for learning is particularly effective. Initial assessment is thorough with information from interviews and tests in literacy and numeracy carefully recorded. Good support for learners who have additional needs in numeracy is planned and offered on an individual basis. Apprentices enjoy these lessons and make good progress. The tutor keeps detailed records of their progress and achievements. Theory sessions are carefully planned and managed. The expected outcomes are clearly explained and tutors prepare a range of activities to inform and reinforce learning. Trainers make the most of opportunities to apply learning about health and safety to the learners' own health and well-being. Resources are used effectively for presenting information and for practical tasks. These include interactive whiteboards, the internet, creative materials and good quality handouts. All learners have access to careers advice both at the centre and at college.

Leadership and management

31. Overall management of the area is satisfactory. Internal and external communication is good in supporting partnership working. Staff are well qualified with appropriate experience and effective professional development plans. Resources are used effectively to enhance training. Staff are effectively involved with the self-assessment process which accurately identified strengths and areas for improvement. Learners' views are sought and when issues are identified, prompt actions are taken for example to involve the learners more in the induction process. Arrangements for quality improvements are satisfactory. The observation of teaching and learning process is well established, however, the trainer does not always receive a copy of the observation report. Assessors attend regular meetings to share assessment practices, although using the shared practice is not consistent.
32. Equality of opportunity is satisfactorily introduced at induction. Apprentices develop a greater understanding through the review process with the trainer using questions about a range of diversity issues. Learners understand well how to promote equality of opportunity in their workplaces. They recognise how to meet the needs of children from different cultural backgrounds through providing appropriate diets and by celebrating various festivals. Apprentices are confident of how to protect themselves from harassment in workplaces and at the centres and understand the procedure for appealing against assessment decisions.

Construction crafts

Satisfactory: Grade 3

Context

33. Currently 14 learners are enrolled on carpentry and joinery apprenticeship programmes with 13 on the level 2 apprenticeship and one on the advanced apprenticeship programme. In addition two learners are on the E2E programme working towards NVQ level 1 in wood occupations. Both carpentry and E2E learners have work placements and study towards key skills qualifications. The learners work placements are arranged by the Service within a few weeks of starting training. Six learners are now employed full-time. Learners spend one day a week in the L&CLS's centre in Darlington and the remaining four days in the workplace. Placements range from large construction companies undertaking new build housing to sole traders carrying out maintenance work. One member of staff trains learners in the centre and visits them in the workplace to review progress and assess competence. A subcontracted internal verifier oversees the assessment process. Part of the technical certificate assessment is carried out by the staff using facilities at a nearby further education college.

Strengths

- Good success rates on the advanced apprenticeship programme
- Particularly effective support for learners
- Very good partnership working

Areas for improvement

- Low success rates on the apprenticeship programme
- Inadequate resources for practical training

Achievement and standards

34. Success rates on the advanced apprenticeship programme are high. Only learners that have performed well at apprenticeship level and have appropriate employment progress to advanced apprenticeship level. In 2006-07, 80% of apprentices who left their programmes completed the full framework with 75% of them completing before their planned end date. Learners on the level 3 programmes this year are making similarly good progress.

35. Success rates on the apprenticeship programme are low. In 2005-06 only 36% of learners who left achieved the full framework, some 19% below the national average. Some improvements have been made this year but many continue to make slow progress. Of the nine learners who started in this year two have left the programme.

Quality of provision

36. Theory teaching and on-the-job training in the workplace are both well-planned and satisfactory. The assessment and verification process is also sound. Good evidence is collected from the workplace using photographs and witness testimonies. Reviews of

learners' progress are satisfactory. During the progress review meetings, learners' targets are discussed and targets for the next visit are agreed.

37. The range of programmes to meet learners' and employers' needs is satisfactory. One trade is currently offered and learners can progress through from level 1 to level 3. L&CLS is considering offering other trades in the future when the premises are more suitable. While some learners benefit from the Building Futures initiative and some from the Education Maintenance Allowance, others receive no wages other than travel expenses. This has made it difficult for some promising learners to continue training. The Building Futures initiative helps support learners with training subsidies and the provision of a good quality toolkit. This funding lasts for 26 weeks and has been instrumental in encouraging many employers to offer learners work placements. Several of these placements have led to sustained full-time employment for learners
38. Pastoral support for learners is good. Before joining their programmes potential learners are offered clear advice and guidance about the construction industry and their options. A very effective recruitment process uses information from interviews and thorough diagnostic testing to decide on the best programme for learners and the nature of any support required. L&CLS makes good use of the information from the learners' schools about the learners' attitude, strengths and areas in which they may require support. The induction process is comprehensive with learners gaining good information about their rights and responsibilities in their employment and training. The attention to health and safety during the induction is good. Support for literacy and numeracy is good. Learners are able to study key skills at a level higher than that needed for their framework if they have appropriate GCSE results. This helps maintain learners' interest and motivation and prepares for progression to higher levels. The high number of staff in relation to learners allows learning to be more individualised.

Leadership and management

39. Good partnerships with other organisations support learners in enhancing their training and staff in gaining new competencies for example through sharing resources. An arrangement with a further education college has allowed learners to use college facilities for technical certificate assessment and access platform training. An experienced member of staff at the college has also provided support for the new trainer at L&CLS who is the only member of staff teaching construction. This support has included the provision of learning materials and advice and guidance on teaching strategies. The new trainer has been supported well to obtain assessor units and further qualifications needed to assess the technical certificate. Arrangements for quality improvements are effective and consist of a systematic lesson observation programme. The self-assessment report is generally accurate in its presentation of strengths and areas for improvement.
40. Arrangements for equality of opportunities are satisfactory. All learners are currently male with one from a minority ethnic background. The service is aware of its obligation to attract learners from all areas of the community and is working with schools to address the current imbalance. Learners' knowledge of equal opportunities is generally good. L&CLS takes effective action when equality of opportunity issues arises. In one instance when issues of harassment and bullying were identified, the service promptly found another placement for the learner and discontinued its working relationship with the employer.

41. Resources for off-the-job training are inadequate. One room is used for both practical and theory lessons. While appropriate for teaching theory to the five learners present during the inspection, the space is insufficient to effectively perform the practical tasks needed for the technical certificate. A new centre has been obtained and will be ready for occupancy within the next few months.

Information and communication technology

Good: Grade 2

Context

42. L&CLS offers a range of ICT courses at entry level and level 1 in the council's two main adult learning centres and at other community venues. E-learning is in place to enable learners to work outside the classroom environment. The range of courses is provided by ten tutors. In 2006-07, 578 learners were on programme, and 187 enrolled in the first term of 2007-08. Currently 30% of learners are male and 4.5% are from minority ethnic groups.

Strengths

- Good attainment
- High retention rates
- Good support to encourage learning
- Good resources to enhance learners experience of learning
- Very effective management actions to develop responsive provision

Areas for improvement

- Inconsistent completion of learner progress and achievement documentation

Achievement and standards

43. Learner attainment is good. Many enthusiastic and well motivated learners exceed well beyond their initial expectations. Many learners at entry level overcome their anxieties of computers and develop useful basic computing and other skills. Learners use these newly gained competencies confidently in their personal or community activities, for example in producing the agendas for community forum meetings. The standard of learners' work is satisfactory and some learners' portfolios are of a high standard.

44. Retention rates are high. Although the number of learners had increased by 52% in 2006-07 the retention rates remained high at 86%. The retention rates for the first term of 2007-08 are 90%. Most learners who leave the course before completion do so for reasons not connected to the course. Attendance rates are high. Most of the courses offered are at entry level and much of the progression is to other courses at the same level. A small proportion of learners progress to level 1.

Quality of provision

45. Teaching and learning are satisfactory overall. Initial assessment is satisfactory. Although no formal assessment of communication and numeracy skills takes place, these are evaluated by the tutor during the induction phase. However, the completion of learner progress and achievement documentation is inconsistent. Interim reviews are completed by learners but in many instances tutor comments to aid progress are not added. Target-setting is weak. The learner objectives are often not specific, and when they are, these are not referred to in the interim or final reviews. Guidance in many individual learning plans to aid progression is insufficient.

46. Good resources are used effectively to enhance teaching and learning. These include good quality learning materials such as CD-ROMs and very well designed paper-based workbooks. The light and spacious learning environment is well equipped with up-to-date hardware and software, and work stations which have adjustable chairs and screens. Learners have a good understanding of safe working in the classroom, but do not always check their working posture at the computer workstation. Clear strategies to improve learning have been implemented. For example the use information learning technology is now well developed, with the infrastructure in place and staff well trained in using e-learning. Learners are encouraged to use the internet to research during their learning programmes, and to use the Service's virtual learning environment to access learning outside the class environment. Tutors are well qualified vocationally and all are qualified teachers or are working to achieve a recognised qualification.
47. The range of provision to meet community needs is satisfactory. The courses are well planned with progression opportunities. Where the Service does not provide suitable courses, good partnership working enables learners to be signposted to other provision in other providers.
48. Learners' are offered good support encouraging them to learn and progress. Tutors provide a calm and encouraging learning environment that helps learners to develop confidence and skills. A number of learners have benefited from the supportive teaching environment helping them to focus on issues other than their recent personal misfortune or hardship, with all successfully completing their learning programmes. Well qualified support is provided for learners who require additional learning support during teaching sessions.

Leadership and management

49. Very effective action is taken to respond to the community's learning needs. L&CLS monitors well the learning demands of the community and responds swiftly to address gaps in the provision. The Service responded well to the effect of one provider withdrawing entry level courses in 2005-06 by increasing its capacity by 52% in 2006-07, while maintaining the learners' success rates. This higher level of recruitment has continued in 2007-08. A clear strategy is in place to promote courses to the general public and identify potential learners. The Services' consultation with community forums is effective in identifying the community's interest in new ICT courses. The Service promotes these courses well through course brochure distribution to some 55,000 households.
50. The quality improvement process is satisfactory. Learner progress and feedback is evaluated well during and at the end of each course. Each course receives a monitoring visit from managers three weeks from commencement to resolve any issues which the learners may experience. At the end of each course all learner and course file documents, including learner feedback questionnaires, are reviewed to ensure learner records are completed. Information on attendance and progression is also collected. Learner performance information is analysed and used satisfactorily to evaluate the effectiveness of learning and of course design. Tutors are observed regularly, each term for inexperienced tutors and annually for experienced tutors, and the outcomes are used to inform staff and programme development. Staff are trained to take part in the self-

assessment process, with all staff participating in group meetings to evaluate the provision and develop an action plan.

51. Equality of opportunity is satisfactory. Partnership working with the Darlington Association on Disabilities and the provider disability equality scheme is well developed. Learners support needs are identified at enrolment and during the initial assessment process and when required, support is provided sensitively and discreetly. A wide range of assistive technology equipment is available to support learners with visual, hearing and physical disabilities or difficulties. The Service takes a good approach to funding the learners' support workers during teaching sessions, for example if a learner with physical or learning difficulties has an existing support worker. A range of equal opportunity targets are set with a strong focus on skills development for the unemployed.

Classical and modern foreign languages

Good: Grade 2

Context

52. L&CLS offers non-accredited courses in four European languages, French, German, Italian and Spanish at beginner and intermediate levels. At the time of the inspection a total of 58 learners were enrolled on programmes on seven courses. Of these learners 53.4% are female, two are from minority ethnic backgrounds and two have disabilities. Learning sessions are normally two hours long and take place weekly in the afternoons and evenings. Courses usually last for ten weeks. Currently three part-time tutors are employed to offer this provision.

Strengths

- Good achievement
- Effective planning for learning
- Good support for learners
- Very effective curriculum management

Areas for improvement

- No significant areas for improvement

Achievement and standards

53. Achievement is good. Achievement rates are and have been consistently high over time. This is despite a significant increase to the learner numbers in 2006-07, when another provider withdrew its provision. Retention rates, punctuality and attendance are also good.
54. Most learners successfully develop the four main language skills they need to benefit from their programmes of study. They learn to speak, listen, read and when appropriate write in the language they are studying. Learners' spoken language is at least satisfactory in terms of pronunciation, intonation and vocabulary. The skills of reading, listening and writing are consistently practised, and learners make good progress.

Quality of provision

55. Planning for learning is effective. Lessons are well designed and structured. Learners value and benefit from tutors' command of the language, and the clarity and confidence of lesson delivery. Learners use and practise their language skills well while continuing to acquire new vocabulary and structures. Standardised schemes of work are used flexibly by tutors to meet the needs and interests of learners. Tutors monitor and assess learners' progress effectively through teaching sessions, activities and homework giving detailed and constructive feedback that contributes to learners' development. Learners complete informal initial assessment tasks on arrival at the first session, and individual learning plans are in place and used appropriately to support learning. For example, learning objectives are clear and reviews are completed at appropriate stages, with learners

reflecting on their learning and where necessary adjusting objectives as they make progress.

56. A wide range of resources and materials is appropriately used in lessons. These include interactive whiteboards and audio and video equipment which are used to enhance and reinforce learning. For instance, one tutor used electronic media well to demonstrate grammatical structures in an alternative and motivating way. Tutors produce appropriate learning resources of their own including cue cards and pictures of good quality. Staff are appropriately qualified to teach their subject. Learners benefit from good accommodation and an appropriate environment. Rooms are set out well and are acoustically effective.
57. The availability, appropriateness and accuracy of pre-course information and guidance are satisfactory overall. A range of information is available such as a mail-shot of the Borough's magazine and library copies of the prospectus, and potential learners are also recruited through personal recommendation and direct enquiries. Learners enjoy their courses, make good progress overall and aspire to continue with language learning. The needs and interests of complete beginners are adequately met. Many learners are keen to continue beyond the ten-week programme to consolidate and to extend their learning. However, not all learners are aware of alternative provision within the Borough, or are able to access it at a time or stage that suits their needs.
58. Learners benefit from good support. During the teaching sessions tutors listen attentively to learners during pair and group work, and sensitively tailor intervention and offer support according to individual needs. For instance, a tutor adapted a task to probe the understanding of a learner struggling with a linguistic concept, and provided opportunities to reinforce and practise the structure in a positive and constructive way. Similarly, opportunities were built in for more confident learners to experiment and to adapt the new language and structures to express their own needs and interests.

Leadership and management

59. Curriculum management is very effective. Managers and tutors work together well to plan the curriculum and work in partnership with other providers in the Borough. For instance, curriculum planning takes into account the availability of accredited provision from other providers, and also the socio-economic profile of individual wards within the town. Curriculum planning makes good use of the strengths of individual partners, and in the case of the Service these are accessibility of venues, availability of daytime provision, outreach programmes, short courses and work in the community. The languages offer is deliberately targeted at introductory, first rung provision and a high proportion of the learners on programme benefit from reduced fees. Employers' needs are considered through links with the business community established via the Darlington Learning & Cultural Partnership. Innovative examples of collaboration and co-operation are apparent, based on strong and well-established links between partners. For example, a joint awards ceremony is held annually at which individual and groups of learners receive prizes at a prestigious venue such as the local football stadium or the council chamber. The learners value this recognition of their achievement, and take great pleasure and pride in their participation. In addition, the partnership shares expertise and occasionally tutors where needed.

60. The manager is a subject specialist offering very effective guidance and support to tutors, together with skilled monitoring, observation and feedback. Observation grades are reliable. Information from the observation of teaching and learning is used well to plan individuals' professional development plans. Good opportunities for generic and subject-specific staff development are available. For instance tutors have met to discuss ways of exploiting information learning technology, and to consider broader approaches to assessment and monitoring in modern languages. Tutors are fully involved with the self-assessment process.

Family learning

Good: Grade 2

Context

61. The Service offers a diverse range of provision in collaboration within an extensive partnership. Wider family learning courses are offered in confidence building, personal skills, mentorship and playing with language. Currently eight courses are offered in partnership with the Youth Service including health awareness and an introduction to youth work. All courses are free of charge with the exception of the level 2 helping in schools programme which is means tested. A free crèche is available as required.
62. Some 115 learners, eight of whom are male, attend family learning provision offered in a range of five primary schools, six children's centres and one nursery. Courses vary from one-day, unaccredited, taster workshops to a one-year, level 2 NVQ programme and most programmes run for 30 hours. A full-time foundation programme manager, reporting to the Service manager leads the provision with two, permanent full-time tutors and two part-time tutors. Provision is targeted to the areas of greatest deprivation. Around 50% of courses are specifically linked to national tests to enable parents to access accreditation for the development of their literacy, numeracy and ICT skills.

Strengths

- Good development of learners' skills
- Highly responsive to the needs of vulnerable learners
- Innovative support for families in crisis
- Very effective partnerships

Areas for improvement

- Insufficient promotion of progression routes
- Small class sizes

Achievement and standards

63. Learners' personal skills are developed well. Learners are proud of their achievements. They are more able to help their children with their homework because of their improved understanding of how literacy and numeracy are taught in school. They are more patient and manage the behaviour of their children better. Additionally, learners gain increased confidence, enhanced communication skills and a desire to continue learning. Many learners greatly value the increased social contact and new links into local communities they gain. Several learners have progressed from family learning courses into employment in schools and four students have recently become parent governors.
64. Achievement rates are high. In 2006-07, 80% of learners achieved their learning goals. All learners attending family learning classes are offered accreditation. However, in a third of observed classes learners' existing qualifications were not given sufficient recognition when determining the appropriate level of assessment.

Quality of provision

65. Teaching and learning are effective. In the better classes lessons are well planned and aims are clearly stated. The Service has a strong focus on developing activities parents can share with their children to enhance children's reading and language skills. Learner participation is encouraged. In the weaker classes reinforcement of key learning points during group activities and discussions is underdeveloped. Individual learning plans are generally used well. They are completed by learners and identify individual attainable learning goals. Plans are reviewed regularly to identify new knowledge and understanding and enable learners to recognise their progress. When additional learning needs are identified, some learners receive learning support in class by support staff, and others are effectively assisted by the class tutor. Teaching resources are good and many classrooms are well equipped and well resourced.
66. The Service is highly responsive to the needs of vulnerable learners. Staff are welcoming and supportive and they establish a culture of purposeful learning. Learners are supported and value the approachability and friendliness of all staff. Learners who were at risk of leaving have been supported well. The provision is modified in response to learners' views, for example, an ICT course was developed as a result of learners' requests. Learners have tailored a confidence building programme, renaming and adapting the programme's content to suit their needs. During the sessions learners create learning resources of a high standard which they use with their children at home. Some programmes have been designed to attract more men and boys and these are being further developed. However, very few progression opportunities to programmes above level 1 are available. Most programmes are at level 1 and many learners have accessed several programmes at this level. Although learners enjoy the range of opportunities, promotion of progression routes both within the service and to external providers, is insufficient.
67. Innovative support is available for families in crisis. The development of the family learning intensive support project enables isolated and hard to reach learners to receive regular home tuition. The intensive support programme works in liaison with a range of partners including social services, the health service and the Youth Offending Service. The programme has been highly effective in supporting some of the most vulnerable learners in the community to develop communication and advocacy skills. From the 22 learners on the programme three have now chosen to access accredited learning programmes.

Leadership and management

68. Partnership work is very effective. The Service works across a wide range of providers and demonstrates a good understanding of the *Every Child Matters* agenda of multi-agency support for families. The partnership working promotes good planning and management of provision across a wide range of providers in areas of high deprivation. Regular liaison between partners takes place. Several courses and events have been designed collaboratively in response to identified learning needs. For example, work with the Youth Offending Service led to the development of a successful residential weekend for 'Dads and Lads', incorporating climbing and outdoor activities. Further projects to encourage greater male participation in family learning are being developed.

69. All staff are teacher trained or are undertaking training programmes. Tutors are well supported and regular in-service staff development opportunities take place. Quality improvement systems are used well and include a systematic approach to observation of teaching sessions. Grades are moderated during team meetings to assure consistency. Tutors are very enthusiastic and committed to their work. The self-assessment report is broadly accurate and appropriately self-critical. Areas for improvement are identified and actions are implemented.
70. Class sizes are very small. Of the 28 programmes currently running 15 have fewer than eight learners. This restricts the variety of teaching and learning strategies.

Annex

Learners' achievements

Success rates on work-based learning apprenticeship programmes managed by the provider 2004 to 2007

| Programme | End Year | Success rate | No. of Learners | Provider NVQ rate | National NVQ rate | Provider framework rate | National framework rate |
|--------------------------|----------|--------------|-----------------|-------------------|-------------------|-------------------------|-------------------------|
| Advanced Apprenticeships | 04-05 | overall | 8 | 88% | 48% | 88% | 34% |
| | | timely | 4 | 50% | 31% | 50% | 22% |
| | 05-06 | overall | 7 | 57% | 53% | 57% | 44% |
| | | timely | 7 | 57% | 34% | 57% | 28% |
| | 06-07 | overall | 13 | 77% | 64% | 77% | 56% |
| | | timely | 13 | 46% | 41% | 46% | 35% |
| Apprenticeships | 04-05 | overall | 30 | 90% | 51% | 87% | 39% |
| | | timely | 30 | 50% | 29% | 47% | 22% |
| | 05-06 | overall | 35 | 60% | 58% | 57% | 52% |
| | | timely | 34 | 56% | 38% | 53% | 34% |
| | 06-07 | overall | 37 | 62% | 65% | 62% | 60% |
| | | timely | 36 | 50% | 45% | 50% | 42% |

Note 'At the time of the inspection – LSC data for 2006-07 had yet to be fully validated'

* Learners who leave later than originally planned are counted in the year they actually leave. This group of learners are then added to the learners who planned to complete in a given year and did so or left earlier than planned.

** Provider and national vocational qualification success rates are calculated using LSC published data derived from the 'Individual Learning Record'