

# City Lit Reinspection

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Adult Learning Inspectorate Inspection Report 19 January 2007

**Reinspection date** 30 January 2008

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**Inspection number**

318286

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## Background information

### Inspection judgements

Inspectors use a four-point scale to summarise their judgements about the quality of provision in occupational/curriculum areas and Jobcentre Plus programmes, as well as to summarise their judgements about the quality of learning sessions. The same scale is used to describe the quality of leadership and management, which includes equality of opportunity and quality assurance. The descriptors for the four grades are:

- grade 1 – outstanding
- grade 2 – good
- grade 3 – satisfactory
- grade 4 – inadequate

## Description of the provider

1. City Lit is located in Covent Garden, in the London Borough of Camden. It was established in 1919 by the London County Council as one of five literary institutes. Its original brief was to stimulate demand for evening study among office workers, mainly in the arts and humanities. This is still part of its mission, though its provision has been broadened extensively and now includes courses in a number of specialist areas such as literacy numeracy and English for speakers of other languages (ESOL), speech therapy, sign language and lip reading. City Lit was incorporated in 1990 and is both a company limited by guarantee and a registered charity. Since 2001, it has been funded by the Learning and Skills Council (LSC) for London Central. In 2005, City Lit moved to new premises in Covent Garden. The building is the largest adult education centre in Europe and has 58 classrooms. City Lit serves a number of communities, both local and throughout London. City Lit also attracts learners from outside London because of the specialist nature of many of its courses. In recent years, it has developed a growing programme of community outreach courses to meet the learning needs of under-represented groups of adults in local neighbourhoods. In 2006/07, more than 23,000 learners took up over 46,000 places and enrolled on around 3,340 courses at City Lit.

## Grades

grade 1= outstanding, grade 2= good, grade 3= satisfactory, grade 4= inadequate

### Grades awarded at previous inspection

Leadership and management		2
Contributory grades:		
Equality of opportunity		2
Quality improvement		3

Health, public services and care		1
Contributory areas:	Number of learners	Contributory grade
<i>Other subjects and vocations allied to medicine</i>		<i>1</i>
Adult and community learning	68	1

Arts, media and publishing		1
Contributory areas:	Number of learners	Contributory grade
<i>Dramatic arts</i>		<i>1</i>
Adult and community learning	1,205	1
<i>Music</i>		<i>2</i>
Adult and community learning	2,076	2
<i>Crafts</i>		<i>1</i>
Adult and community learning	1,076	1
Languages, literature and culture		2
Contributory areas:	Number of learners	Contributory grade
<i>Other languages, literature and culture</i>		<i>2</i>

Adult and community learning	3,260	2
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Preparation for life and work		4
Contributory areas:	Number of learners	Contributory grade
<b><i>Literacy and numeracy</i></b>		<b>4</b>
Adult and community learning	863	4

Family learning		3
Contributory areas:	Number of learners	Contributory grade
<b><i>Adult and community learning</i></b>		<b>3</b>
Adult and community learning	390	3

#### Grades awarded at reinspection

Preparation for life and work		3
Contributory areas:	Number of learners	Contributory grade
<b><i>Literacy and numeracy</i></b>		<b>3</b>
Adult and community learning	583	3

## About the reinspection

2. City lit was inspected by the Adult Learning Inspectorate in January 2007. This inspection judged two sector subject areas outstanding, one area as good and one satisfactory. Leadership and management and the contributory grade for equality of opportunity were good. The contributory grade for quality improvement was satisfactory. The sector subject area preparation for life and work was graded inadequate. This area formed the sole focus for the reinspection. One interim monitoring visit included discussions with learners and staff. Following the reinspection, all sector subject areas are judged satisfactory or better. Overall effectiveness remains good. Provision in preparation for life and work is now satisfactory.

Number of inspectors	2
Number of inspection days	5
Number of learners interviewed	40
Number of staff interviewed	23
Number of sites visited	1
Number of visits to the provider	2*

\* includes one monitoring visit

## Areas of learning

### Preparation for life and work

### Grade 3

Contributory areas:	Number of learners	Contributory grade
<i>Literacy and numeracy</i>		3
Adult and community learning	583	3

3. At the time of the reinspection, 255 learners were enrolled in the skills for life programme area of the Essential Skills and Outreach faculty on discrete literacy and numeracy courses and programmes of ESOL at City Lit. A further 23 learners followed programmes which integrate literacy numeracy and/or ESOL with different vocational subjects. In addition, 184 learners were taking part in discrete literacy and numeracy courses provided for learners who are deaf or have hearing difficulties by the Continuing Education Service (CES) of the Deaf Education and Learning Support faculty. Classes take place during the daytime and evenings, for between three and six hours each week. Most courses take place at City Lit, although the institute offers literacy and numeracy qualifications in the workplace for some employers. City Lit also offers study skills and dyslexia support to learners following programmes across the curriculum. At the time of inspection 121 learners received support. Most support is on an individual basis for half an hour or an hour a week.

### Literacy and numeracy

#### *Strengths*

- Good study support for learners
- Effective action to improve provision

#### *Weaknesses*

- Insufficiently thorough assessment of achievement in non accredited learning

### Achievement and standards

4. Retention rates are good. They have improved since the previous inspection when they were satisfactory. In the first term of 2007/08 retention rates were 90% compared with 71% at the time of the previous inspection.
5. Success rates on courses leading to external accreditation have improved significantly since the previous inspection when they were poor. Recent success rates are at or approaching, satisfactory levels for most courses. Success rates on numeracy programmes have risen from 60% in 2005/06 to 80% on courses ending in the first term of the 2007/08 academic year. Success rates on ESOL programmes have risen from 37% to 68% during the same period. On accredited literacy courses in CES for deaf and hearing impaired learners, success rates have improved strongly from 14% in 2005/06 to 56% in 2006/07 but remain low. Success rates on non accredited literacy and numeracy programmes in skills for life are satisfactory.

6. Attendance rates have improved and are now satisfactory. They have risen to 84% for learners on CES courses and to 76 % for those on skills for life courses. In the term leading up to the previous inspection attendance at skills for life courses was poor at 59%.
7. Learners' skills are satisfactory or better on most courses. In learning sessions they work with concentration for sustained periods. They contribute actively and confidently in oral work. Learners receiving dyslexia support use improvement strategies well.

### **The quality of provision**

8. Study support for learners is good, a strength that has been maintained since the previous inspection. City Lit provides effective support for learners with dyslexia or with study skills needs attending a wide range of institute courses. Referral arrangements are clear and well planned. Diagnostic assessment of learners' needs is thorough and effective. Learners receive good coaching and individual help from well qualified tutors with strong expertise. Tutors have a good knowledge of the courses their learners follow and the demands they make on them. Since the previous inspection City Lit has started to analyse the effect of the support it offers. This confirms its value. Overall success rates on their main programme of study for learners receiving support are slightly higher than for those not requiring or receiving it. The CES area provides very effective study support for deaf and hearing impaired learners on its literacy and numeracy programmes. All tutors are fluent users of sign language. They use this routinely and effectively in their teaching enabling their learners to follow the same curricula as other literacy and numeracy learners at City Lit.
9. Teaching and learning are satisfactory and have improved since the previous inspection when teaching was a key weakness. In the better sessions learning activities are varied, well paced and sequenced, designed effectively to extend learners' skills. Small group and pair work provide good settings for practice and improvement of learner's oral skills and the exchange of ideas. Some sessions allow learners to do productive work independently, often with skilled and effective coaching from tutors. A particular feature of most sessions is the routine and often effective use of information and learning technology (ILT) such as interactive whiteboards and large screen computer display facilities. This is an improvement since the previous inspection, when few tutors had enough confidence or knowledge to use ILT in their teaching. In less successful sessions some practice is weak. In some literacy sessions strategies to promote reading for meaning are poor, with an over-emphasis on reading aloud. Some ESOL learners receive insufficient correction of their pronunciation errors. In learning sessions generally too few tutors offer activities which cater sufficiently for the differing needs of their learners.
10. The range of provision is satisfactory. Since the previous inspection City Lit has reshaped its offer to concentrate more closely on meeting learners' needs and improving their success rates. For example most ESOL learners now routinely follow discrete programmes working towards ESOL qualifications in listening, speaking, reading and writing. At the previous inspection too many followed poorly planned programmes leading inappropriately to literacy accreditation. On most programmes the number of guided learning hours has increased.
11. Personal support for learners is appropriate. Learners receive good informal support from tutors in learning sessions and at academic tutorials. Learners have access to a good range

of institute-wide support services, which refer learners to specialist agencies where necessary.

12. Assessment of achievement in non-accredited learning is not sufficiently thorough. Around a third of learners now work towards non accredited outcomes in literacy and numeracy, mainly in the CES area. Tutors use the outcomes of initial assessment appropriately to place learners in classes at different levels aligned to national standards. Most set and review individual learning goals. These do not always clearly reflect learner's needs, and rarely form an explicit basis for lesson planning. Arrangements to establish how well learners have progressed and achieved by the end of their programme are inconsistent. While some good practice exists, on many courses the mechanisms for establishing learners' levels of achievement are not sufficiently clear or thorough. Arrangements to evaluate learners' progress were a weakness at the previous inspection.

### **Leadership and management**

13. Action to improve and monitor the provision was a key weakness at the previous inspection. It is now effective. City Lit has acted successfully to remedy key weaknesses in learners' success rates and the quality of teaching. The availability, accuracy and use of data to improve the provision have increased. For example, attendance monitoring is now vigorous, and accompanied by a range of effective improvement measures.
14. Action by senior managers has been strong and timely. A recently published vision and strategy document identifies well how City Lit acts to make and improve provision, the importance of literacy numeracy and ESOL across all sector subject areas and the different needs of learners across the institute. This is a major improvement since the previous inspection when the strategy for literacy numeracy and ESOL was judged incomplete. Planning for improvement is now detailed and thorough. A recovery plan initiated shortly after the previous inspection identifies priorities clearly and appropriately. Criteria for judging and monitoring the success of actions are clear. Managers monitor progress closely. A subsequent review of management arrangements for literacy numeracy and ESOL is equally thorough, and implementation is well advanced. Operational management is improved.



15. Observation of teaching and learning has become much more systematic, accompanied by a programme of staff development and training. An internal audit of the provision in October 2007 gave a broadly accurate picture of the significant improvement in learning and teaching since the previous inspection, although subsequent grading of observations overstates the proportion of teaching that is good or better.
16. Self-assessment is satisfactory. City lit has strengthened the self-assessment process appropriately. Self-assessment reports are detailed and use data effectively. Grades in the skills for life and CES reports match the grades awarded at inspection. Key weaknesses identified in the reports are accurate. However, some key strengths are overstated or have little effect on the learners' experience, particularly in the CES report.