

Swarthmore Education Centre

Inspection date

31 January 2008

Inspection number

318827

Contents

Background information	3
Inspection judgements	3
Scope of the inspection.....	3
Description of the provider.....	4
Summary of grades awarded.....	5
Overall judgement.....	6
Effectiveness of provision	6
Capacity to improve	6
Key strengths	7
Key areas for improvement.....	7
Main findings	8
Achievement and standards	8
Quality of provision.....	8
Leadership and management	9
Equality of opportunity	9
What learners like	10
What learners think could improve.....	11
Sector subject areas.....	12
Health and social care.....	12
Preparation for life and work.....	15

Background information

Inspection judgements

Inspectors use a four-point scale to summarise their judgements about achievement and standards, the quality of provision, and leadership and management, which includes a grade for equality of opportunity.

Key for inspection grades

Grade 1	Outstanding
Grade 2	Good
Grade 3	Satisfactory
Grade 4	Inadequate

Further information can be found on how inspection judgements are made on www.ofsted.gov.uk.

Scope of the inspection

In deciding the scope of the inspection, inspectors take account of the provider's most recent self-assessment report and development plans, and comments from the local Learning and Skills Council (LSC) or other funding body. Where appropriate, inspectors also consider the previous inspection report (www.ofsted.gov.uk), reports from the inspectorates' quality monitoring or annual assessment visits, and data on learners and their achievements over the period since the previous inspection.

In addition to reporting on overall effectiveness of the organisation, its capacity to improve further, achievement and standards, quality of provision and leadership and management, this inspection focused on specialist provision in:

- Health and social care
- Preparation for life and work

A small sample of teaching and learning in arts subjects was observed to support judgements in the main findings section of the report.

Description of the provider

1. Swarthmore Education Centre (Swarthmore) is a not-for-profit registered charity and company limited by guarantee, located close to Leeds city centre. It was founded in 1909 by members of the Society of Friends movement and retains its original aims of involving people in learning activities and making sure they are treated equally and with respect. Swarthmore is currently preparing to celebrate its centenary in 2009. There is an elected council of trustees that includes Swarthmore members, representatives of community organisations with shared aims, and two members of the Society of Friends.
2. Swarthmore is based in a part of Leeds that includes wards from the 10% most deprived areas in the country. It attracts 71% of its learners from inner city wards. In 2006-07, 27% of the 1,808 learners were from minority ethnic groups, by comparison with an average of 8.2% for Leeds. A large proportion of learners that attend the centre are unemployed or have low levels of prior qualifications especially in literacy and numeracy.
3. Swarthmore is a centre for lifelong learning, which offers community projects, family learning, children's activities and learning programmes. Swarthmore offers classes in counselling and personal development; information and communications technology (ICT); arts and crafts; music and dance; healthy living; and skills for life. Its main aim is to encourage people who want to learn but who might not feel comfortable in more formal educational institutions. It emphasises the importance of a friendly approach supported by onsite childcare and learning support. More than 30 volunteers currently support Swarthmore's work.
4. Swarthmore occupies a building made up of six four-storey terraced houses with additional dance and art studios to the rear. Specialist facilities are provided for pottery, jewellery, stained glass, sculpture and computing. The provider also runs community projects, including arts-based family learning activities, skills for life and ICT. The provider provides accommodation for more than 40 local groups.
5. Funding of over £500,000 is received to provide educational courses from the LSC, Leeds City Council and Alternative Education Leeds. A programme of income-generating leisure courses helps raise additional funds and attracts a wider range of learners. Swarthmore has successfully met its fee income targets each year set by the LSC. It is part of the Leeds Adult Information advice and Guidance Network and in this role is subcontracted to Careers West Yorkshire for the delivery of Skills Coaching and **nextstep** services in Leeds.

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: Good: Grade 2

Sector subject areas

Health and social care	Good: Grade 2
Preparation for life and work	Good: Grade 2

Overall judgement

Effectiveness of provision

Good: Grade 2

6. The overall effectiveness of the provision is good. Achievement is good and overall success rates on accredited courses are high and improving. Many learners produce a high standard of work and develop good personal, social and practical skills. Many learners achieve their learning goals for the first time since they were at school. The retention of learners in some literacy and numeracy workshops is low. The provision very effectively meets the needs of hard to reach learners. Many learners make good progress to further learning. Teaching and learning are satisfactory overall but good in counselling and the arts. Guidance and support is particularly good for learners from vulnerable groups and those with additional needs. Leadership and management are good as are the arrangements for equality of opportunity and educational inclusion. Arrangements to assure the quality of teaching and learning are insufficiently thorough.

Capacity to improve

Good: Grade 2

7. Swarthmore has a good capacity to improve. A strong focus on quality improvement is explicit in its mission and values. Some effective quality improvement measures have contributed to good learner success rates and achievement. The good inspection grades have been maintained since the previous inspection in 2006. Quality procedures are more fully and consistently used. All activities are clearly linked to centre priorities and government targets. Swarthmore generally exceeds its targets for learner recruitment and success. The managers and trustees have carefully considered the future and assessed its risks. All activities focus strongly on ensuring that learners stay engaged and are successful. Swarthmore has plans to strengthen arrangements to assure the quality of teaching and learning. The revised quality cycle includes deadlines for reporting throughout the year.
8. The self-assessment process is good. It is thorough, inclusive, covers all teaching and business support services and is informed by progress reviews of the quality improvement plan. Self-assessment is established, analytical, mostly self-critical and proposed grades are thoroughly moderated. The quality of analysis is particularly evaluative in the arts and preparation for life sections. The report is informed by the views of learners, staff and other stakeholders. Swarthmore has a strong focus on learners' achievements and aspects of the learning experience. The self-assessment report is largely accurate with judgements and grades matching those found at inspection. Swarthmore has made good progress in resolving issues identified during the previous inspection. Progress is effectively monitored through regular review of the quality improvement plan.
9. Arrangements for assuring the quality of teaching and learning are insufficiently thorough. Observations are well planned and priority is given to teachers who need development and to new teachers. Observation records sometimes mix evaluative statements with descriptive detail. Individual judgements are not weighted and no separate evaluative summary is recorded to support the grade. Teachers value the feedback, action points from observations are precise and progress against them is monitored. Summary analyses of observations for each programme area are produced but none to inform trends in the

overall quality of teaching and learning in the centre. Managers recognise the need for further training in observation methods, recording techniques, and moderation of findings. About half of tutors are observed each year and separate observations are carried out by Education Leeds of subcontracted provision.

Key strengths

- High success rates
- Good development of learners' personal, social and practical skills
- Successful partnerships that enhance the recruitment of and support for vulnerable groups
- Strong promotion of equality and diversity
- Strong support and good provision for children and young people aged 13-16
- Safe and welcoming learning environment

Key areas for improvement

- Insufficiently thorough arrangements to assure the quality of teaching and learning
- Low retention rates in some literacy and numeracy workshops
- Maintenance of and improvements to the standard of accommodation and information technology facilities

Main findings

Achievement and standards

Good: Grade 2

10. Achievement and standards are good. Success rates on accredited courses have been consistently above 70% in the last three years and are now 78% in 2006-07. This is particularly good in comparison with all external institutions and especially since the learners usually have low levels of prior qualifications. Swarthmore is one of the highest achieving external institutions nationally in meeting the LSC's minimum levels of performance. A high proportion of learners on other courses, including those funded by Leeds City Council, successfully achieve their learning goals. Achievements by learners from minority ethnic groups and many young people aged 14-16 are good. Learners produce work of a high standard often exceeding their original expectations. They develop good practical information technology and study skills. Learners' work is celebrated publicly in exhibitions at the centre. Many arts learners progress well enough to be able to exhibit and sell their work. In a few classes attendance is erratic and retention rates are low.

Quality of provision

Good: Grade 2

11. The quality of education and training is good. Teaching is good in the arts and on counselling courses. Arts teachers make particularly good use of demonstrations to set standards that inspire learners and to illustrate practical techniques. Most teachers skilfully develop projects that suit learners with mixed levels of prior knowledge. Some teaching in literacy and numeracy classes fails to challenge learners sufficiently. Access to information learning technology facilities, including the internet, is insufficient. Most tutors have or are working towards teaching qualifications. Many skills for life tutors have specialist qualifications and arts tutors are practicing artists.
12. Assessment practice is satisfactory. Learners make further improvements to their work after good feedback from tutors. The use of individual learning plans and procedures for the recognising and recording of progress and achievement (RARPA) has improved and most tutors set precise and challenging targets to monitor learners' progress. In exercise classes learning objectives are included in a health assessment. The monitoring of skills for life learners' progress is inconsistent.
13. Arrangements to meet the needs and interests of learners are good. The programme is particularly responsive to the learning needs of hard to reach groups, including refugees, asylum seekers, and homeless people. Swarthmore seeks to include all learners and has raised additional funds for adults recovering from alcohol misuse. Courses run throughout the day and at weekends to suit the needs of individual learners including carers and shift workers. Swarthmore offers basic skills and childcare courses for disengaged young people aged 14-16. The curriculum is broad in most areas with a good choice of subjects and progression opportunities.
14. Guidance and support are good. Swarthmore offers particularly effective additional learning support to diverse groups including learners with a learning disability or health problems. Learning support assistants and volunteers collaborate with tutors to provide good support. Managers promote a strongly supportive culture but also encourage learners

to become more independent. Learners benefit from good onsite advice and guidance. Arrangements to monitor the attendance of learners are satisfactory although some tutors do not fully record actions taken.

Leadership and management

Good: Grade 2

Equality of opportunity

Contributory grade: Good: Grade 2

15. Leadership and management are good. Through well considered strategic planning, managers and trustees set a clear direction for the development of Swarthmore which gives priority to its inclusive mission. Swarthmore is highly valued by the community as an educational and social resource. Managers work hard to raise the quality of provision with good support from trustees.
16. Education programmes are effectively managed by a strong team. Managers concentrate on enabling learners to achieve and good use is made of management information to monitor all aspects of learning. Teachers use a good range of learning resources in classrooms. Swarthmore recognises the need for better facilities for information and communication technology and for learners to study privately. All staff and volunteers are subject to checks by the Criminal Records Bureau. Tutors have appropriate training opportunities although a few do not have the time to attend.
17. Partnerships contribute effectively to strategies to widen participation particularly by under-represented groups in education. Swarthmore makes good use of trustees' knowledge to respond to local needs. Celebratory community events effectively promote learning opportunities for prospective learners. Through good liaison with Education Leeds an effective programme has been developed to re-engage children aged 14-16 who are not in school. Good collaboration with the University of Leeds has led to effective programmes for English speakers of other languages (ESOL) held in local community venues. Staff are represented on several influential local committees that support the welfare of vulnerable people.
18. The promotion of equality of opportunity is particularly good and informed by a positive concern for the personal welfare of learners and staff. Learners are informed regularly of the detailed policies for bullying, harassment and appeals processes. Good crèche facilities are available to support learners' childcare needs. Arrangements to provide support for learners' literacy and numeracy needs are good. The well-used café, an effective welcoming focal point that puts learners at their ease, offers a good choice of affordable healthy food. Access to the centre has been improved for learners with restricted mobility. The five outcomes of *Every Child Matters* are applied to all provision.
19. Further progress has been made since the previous inspection in establishing a clear quality assurance cycle with procedures clearly linked to a timetable for monitoring. Good use is made of regular learner feedback to improve the quality of provision. Responses to suggested improvements are communicated effectively. Strong emphasis is placed on ensuring learners enjoy a positive learning experience. Assessment and verification arrangements are effective.

20. Arrangements to improve the quality of teaching and learning are insufficiently thorough, although some tutors have improved their teaching through feedback on their performance. Swarthmore recognises that observers need further training in making evaluative summaries and the need for more sharing of good practice across curriculum areas.
21. Self-assessment is thorough, inclusive and places a strong emphasis on learners' achievements. The self-assessment report is largely accurate. Swarthmore has made good progress in resolving issues identified during the previous inspection.

What learners like:

- 'I'm much more confident and I've learned many new skills on this course'
- 'I surprised myself with how well I learned'
- 'It's friendly here'
- 'You get individual tuition'
- 'Helpful volunteers'
- 'I can understand the teacher'
- 'They are extremely helpful, I can't ask for more'
- 'I started at the basics, now I'm moving up'
- 'I like the onsite crèche. My child is learning in there'
- 'It's a place that people who have failed everywhere else feel comfortable and can succeed'

What learners think could improve:

- 'I would like longer courses'
- 'I'd like some social functions. We could use the hall'
- 'I'd like somewhere quiet to do some more work'
- 'In my class, my learning is slow as new people join the course every week and the teacher has to spend so much time with them, we have to wait'
- 'The noise from the heating system in the hall means I can't hear'

Sector subject areas

Health and social care

Good: Grade 2

Context

22. The provision includes programmes in counselling, complementary therapies and health related exercise classes. In 2006-07, 442 learners enrolled on more than 32 courses. Currently 257 learners are enrolled, of whom 78% are female, 16% are from minority ethnic backgrounds and 14% have a learning disability. Counselling courses are offered from level 2 to level 4 and include introductory, certificate and diploma programmes. Other healthy living courses include personal development, aromatherapy, Indian head massage, hypnotherapy and Bach flower remedies. Exercise courses include yoga, tai chi, Alexander technique and Pilates. A programme of one-day workshops includes basic first aid. All courses are held in the main centre.

Strengths

- Good achievement on counselling courses
- Good development of communication, social and personal skills
- Good teaching and learning
- Effective quality assurance

Areas for improvement

- Insufficient resources in some areas

Achievement and standards

23. Learners' achievement on counselling courses is good. In 2005-06 and 2006-07 the average pass rate was around 94%. Retention on the counselling courses improved from 71% in 2005-06 to 80% in 2006-07 and is 87% to date in the current year. Learners gain useful communication, social and personal skills on their courses. Learners on healthy living courses acquire good techniques and talk enthusiastically about the health benefits they gain and the opportunity to make new friends and share experiences. All learners become more confident, and improve their self-esteem and motivation. Counselling learners develop good practical skills which enable them to carry out challenging practise sessions with confidence. They learn to work in groups and develop trust in other class members. Learners acquire good communication skills that enable them to work sensitively with others and in accordance with required counselling practice.

24. The standard of learners' work is satisfactory. Counselling learners' portfolios and learning journals meet the required standard and include good self-reflection on counselling practice. On non-accredited courses practical work is completed satisfactorily in line with the lesson aims and the individual learning goals of learners.

Quality of provision

25. Teaching and learning are good. Counselling tutors set challenging tasks and successfully encourage learners to reflect on their experiences. In practical classes tutors use their expertise and knowledge to show learners how to develop their skills and techniques. In

counselling classes tasks are well-designed to ensure that learners are able to integrate practice with theory in ways which help them understand and maintain interest. The assessment of accredited learning is satisfactory. Assignment work is carefully explained so that learners understand the qualification requirements and the standards they need to reach to be successful.

26. Monitoring and recording of learners' progress is good. On accredited courses learners' progress is regularly monitored against examining body requirements. On non-accredited courses learners identify their personal learning goals at the start of the course through the RARPA process. Progress towards these goals is carefully reviewed through regular discussions between the tutor and learner. Many learners take the opportunity to comment on their own progress and to re-set their goals if necessary.
27. A small but specialised range of courses are available throughout the year in response to identified local needs. Courses cater for a range of interests and vocational needs and attract learners of all ages including many older learners. Counselling courses are offered at different levels and many learners progress from the introductory course through to the full diploma. Specific courses are targeted at groups under-represented in adult education. New courses are offered each year as a result of consultations with local communities and organisations. Progression opportunities on the counselling courses are good. Learners are able to progress from introductory level through to the diploma at level 3 or 4.
28. Support for learners is satisfactory. Learners appreciate the encouragement and dedication of tutors and all other staff at the centre. Learners with childcare needs make good use of the crèche facilities so that they can attend their classes. Initial advice and guidance is offered to all learners although not all take it up. Induction sessions are arranged for the introduction to counselling learners to ensure that it is suitable for them. Initial assessments for counselling learners are held in the first lesson and any additional learning needs including literacy are identified at an early stage.

Leadership and management

29. Curriculum management is good. Processes for assuring the quality of provision are effective. The quality cycle allows opportunities for monitoring and reviewing provision throughout the year. Observations of teaching and learning take place during the quality month with some follow-up visits to check on tutors' progress against their action plans. All new tutors are observed and mentored throughout their first term. Lesson observation records are analytical and highlight examples of good teaching performance measured against the criteria of the *Common Inspection Framework*. Regular feedback from learners is used to inform decisions on course management and development. The counselling team make effective use of peer group observations which helps them share good practice. All counselling tutors assess their own performance. Communication between staff is good and curriculum meetings take place on a regular basis although not all tutors are always able to attend.
30. Resources in some areas are insufficient. Learners on counselling courses do not have access to information learning technology facilities and they are unable to use the internet to develop their resources for their journals and reflective work. Schemes of work and lesson plans contain few references to available information and how information learning technology can be used to enrich learning. Learners are unable to study privately at the centre as no designated study area is available. The self-assessment process is thorough with regular staff consultation. Equal opportunities are well promoted throughout the

curriculum and staff are sensitive to the diverse cultural and social backgrounds of their learners.

Preparation for life and work

Good: Grade 2

Context

31. The programme includes skills for life courses and courses for learners with learning difficulties. Provision is mainly delivered at the education centre with a few classes in community venues. Subjects include literacy, numeracy, ESOL, arts, crafts, music, health and citizenship. Swarthmore has 12 part-time tutors and five part-time learning support assistants. The provision is managed by the skills for life manager. Of the 264 learners 174 are female, 110 are from minority ethnic groups, and 74 have a declared disability. Currently 87 of the learners are on ESOL programmes.

Strengths

- Good development of learners' confidence and skills
- Good achievement
- Very effective response to local community and diverse learner needs
- Particularly good support for learners
- Effective partnerships to widen participation

Areas for improvement

- Low retention in some literacy and numeracy workshops
- Insufficiently thorough recording of learner progress

Achievement and standards

32. Achievement and standards are good. In 2006-07, 76% of learners achieved their individual learning targets or qualifications. In 2005-06 pass rates were very good at 89% for learners who took literacy and numeracy qualifications. In 2005-06, 23 young people aged 14-16 years passed literacy or numeracy qualifications and in 2006-07, 18 passed. The provider is making good progress towards the LSC targets for qualification achievement in literacy and numeracy. This strength is recognised in the self-assessment report.

33. The development of learners' confidence and skills is good. Learners improve their communication and social skills and become more confident in their abilities. Learners are able to use these new skills in their everyday lives, such as using numeracy skills to help with shopping. Learners make good progress and some, having completed their courses, now work as volunteers or are employed as teaching assistants or teachers. The standard of most learners work is good. On art courses, many learners produce good original work and are proud to have their work exhibited in the centre. Learners' achievements are celebrated through exhibitions and awarded certificates and these add to learners' feelings of self-worth.

34. Retention rates are low in some literacy and numeracy workshop sessions. In 2006-07, in four of the twelve workshops, retention was at or below 50%. In the current year, attendance and punctuality in some literacy, numeracy, and ESOL courses are poor. The late arrival of some learners in sessions disrupts both their learning and the learning of others.

Quality of provision

35. Teaching and learning is generally satisfactory. In the better lessons, teachers plan a good range of stimulating learning activities and use practical resources to support learning. Coaching and support for individual learners is good. However, several tutors make insufficient use of group work or resources to accelerate learning and to inspire learners. In some lessons the pace is too slow and many learners spend too much time working on individual worksheet tasks. The initial assessment of literacy and numeracy needs is satisfactory.
36. Recording of learners' progress is inconsistent and insufficiently thorough. In some classes, tutors use innovative approaches to record individual goals, against which small steps of progress are measurable. However, others do not use short-term, measurable targets effectively. A few tutors rely on learners completing a diary at the end of lessons but they are not always completed or learners are unable to assess their own progress.
37. The programme very effectively responds to local community and diverse learner needs. Effective use is made of learners' views to inform planning. For example, a ten-week, fast monitor, literacy and numeracy programme for learners wanting to gain qualifications quickly is offered. Citizenship courses are provided for asylum seekers and refugees and discrete programmes for Asian women. Following reductions in funding for learners with learning difficulties, the centre integrates skills for life into vocational programmes such as the arts. Drop-in skills coaching sessions, funded through **nextstep**, help learners develop their employability skills.
38. Support for learners is particularly good. Learners value the personal support from tutors, volunteers and learning support assistants and this helps them make better progress. Well-established links with other agencies enable learners to gain advice and guidance on a range of personal issues. In-house advice, information and guidance for learners are effective. Tutors and information, advice and guidance staff quickly follow up learner absences by telephone. Parents of pre-school children value the provision of onsite crèche facilities.

Leadership and management

39. Programme management is good. Participation is widened through effective partnerships and an extensive range of initiatives. Partnerships with voluntary and community groups are strong and used well to identify needs and to target particular courses. The programme manager is an active member of community project teams. Well-established links with a wide range of statutory organisations, local community and religious groups enhances the experience of learners and helps them progress. Close partnership with Leeds City Council has enabled the development of appropriate courses for 14-16 years young people who are not attending school. The centre mentors teachers on level 4 skills for life programmes.
40. Staff work closely together to share ideas and to develop the provision. Staff development is extensive and teachers and support staff have, or are working towards, relevant specialist qualifications.
41. The self-assessment report identified many of the strengths and areas for improvement found at inspection. The provider has taken action to develop new approaches to tackle low attendance on courses. Views of tutors and learners are included in the self-

assessment report, however, some volunteers and learning support staff are insufficiently involved. Quality assurance arrangements are satisfactory although the observations of teaching and learning have not yet improved the quality of teaching to a good or better standard.

42. Managers and tutors have a particularly good commitment to promoting equality, diversity and social inclusion. Tutors show genuine care and concern for the personal welfare of learners. However, analysis and use of data on the performance of different groups of learners in the programme is insufficient.