

Thurrock Borough Council

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Background information

Inspection judgements

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

Key for inspection grades

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

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

Scope of the inspection

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

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

- Information and communication technology
- Arts, media and publishing
- Preparation for life and work
- Family learning

Description of the provider

1. Thurrock Borough Council (Thurrock Adult Community College) contracts with Essex Learning and Skills Council (LSC) for the provision of accredited and non-accredited adult and community learning in 13 of the 15 subject sectors and family learning. During 2006/07, there were 2,336 learners accounting for 3,519 enrolments and during 2007/08, there were 1,931 learners on 356 courses. At the time of the inspection, there were, 1,360 learners on 125 courses.
2. Most of the provision is offered through three adult education centres and one school: Grays Adult Education Centre (the college headquarters). South Ockendon AEC, Stanford AEC and Chafford Hundred Campus. There are also 38 other community venues used periodically, with 19 currently used throughout the borough of Thurrock.
3. The senior leadership team consists of the principal, two assistant principals, a financial and administrative manager and 10 part-time curriculum managers across the sector subject areas along with over a hundred part-time tutors.
4. In 2006/07, 56% of learners were new to the college, a decrease from the previous year of 7%. There were 37% of learners entitled to a concessionary fee, an increase of 4%. There were 19% of male learners and 15% of the learners were from minority ethnic groups compared with 7.7% of the local population. Eight per cent of learners declared a disability. Thurrock Council is a unitary local authority along the East Thames Corridor in the South East of England. Unemployment is low, with many jobs that are low skilled and in a narrow range of subjects.

Summary of grades awarded

Effectiveness of provision	Inadequate: Grade 4
Capacity to improve	Inadequate: Grade 4
Achievement and standards	Inadequate: Grade 4
Quality of provision	Inadequate: Grade 4
Leadership and management	Inadequate: Grade 4
Equality of opportunity	Contributory grade: Satisfactory: Grade 3

Sector subject areas

Information & communication technology	Satisfactory: Grade 3
Arts, media and publishing	Satisfactory: Grade 3
Preparation for life and work	Inadequate: Grade 4
Family learning	Inadequate: Grade 4

Overall judgement

Effectiveness of provision

Inadequate: Grade 4

5. The overall effectiveness of the provision is inadequate. Achievement and standards are inadequate as are the quality of teaching and learning. How programmes and activities meet the needs and interests of learners and how they are guided and supported are satisfactory. Leadership and management is inadequate but the arrangements for equality of opportunity are satisfactory. Information and communication technology, and arts, media and publishing are satisfactory. Preparation for life and work, and family learning are unsatisfactory.

Capacity to improve

Inadequate: Grade 4

6. Thurrock Adult Community College has demonstrated insufficient capacity to improve. Processes to monitor and improve the quality of the provision are ineffective. A number of the weaknesses identified at the previous inspection are still present. While success rates in preparation for life have improved they are still low and success rates in other curriculum areas have fallen.
7. The self-assessment process at the college has been appropriately consultative, with the views of staff, governors and learners being taken into account. However, few of the areas for improvement found by inspectors were identified in the self-assessment report. Two of the four curriculum areas inspected were found to be at least one grade lower than the college's judgement. Leadership and management were judged by inspectors to be inadequate while the college self-assessment report grade was satisfactory. Inspectors graded equality of opportunity as satisfactory, the same as the college's self-assessment.

Key strengths

- Effective partnership working to widen participation

Key areas for improvement

- Overall success rates
- Monitoring and improving attendance
- Quality of teaching and learning
- Improve the process to recognise and record progress
- Improve the provision across the college for learners with literacy, numeracy and language needs
- Improve the implementation of quality improvement processes

Main findings

Achievement and standards

Inadequate: Grade 4

8. Overall success rates for accredited courses are unsatisfactory. Although there has been an improvement between the 2005/06 and the 2006/07 academic years, they remain unsatisfactory and are below national averages. In 2005/06, 59% of learners achieved their qualification compared with a national average of 67%. Data for the following year, while not yet validated, would suggest that the figure has risen. The college's own data shows that the increase is primarily through improvements in preparation for life and work courses. In most of the other curriculum areas there was an overall decline in success rates.
9. The standard of learners' work is satisfactory although in art and craft classes the standard is good. Learners are improving their personal and social skills, especially in family learning and in art, although the college does not formally measure or record these improvements. Records to measure achievement of learning goals in non-accredited courses has been recently introduced, however it does not provide reliable information about achievement rates on these courses.
10. Attendance is poor in many classes and at the time of the inspection, attendance rates varied from 92% to 43%. The college was unable to provide attendance figures for the college as a whole. Retention is satisfactory, although it is good at over 90% in arts, media and publishing.

Quality of provision

Inadequate: Grade 4

11. Teaching and learning in preparation for life and work and family learning are inadequate. Teaching is based on activities rather than the skill development and progression of learners. There is too much emphasis on homework books and not on individual learning. The use of information technology in teaching varies across the curriculum areas and is not always used effectively.
12. The quality of progress reviews is satisfactory in information technology and visual arts. There is insufficient target-setting and use of individual learning plans in preparation for life and work, and in family learning. Overall identification of additional learning needs in the provision of learning support is satisfactory.
13. Recognising and recording progress and achievement in non-accredited learning is unsatisfactory in most sector subject areas. In art, it is used effectively particularly at the first stage of initial assessment. Learners' progression is satisfactory, except in arts and media where there are limited opportunities within the courses to gain further experience in a range of media. The range of programmes is good in family learning, meeting the needs of local circumstances.
14. The individual help and learning support given to learners is satisfactory, with over 400 learners receiving satisfactory learning support each year. Voluntary workers are used to provide the support but many of them are inadequately qualified.

15. Information, advice and guidance is satisfactory. Where advice is available, particularly for those learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities it aids progression. In the three month period before inspection, there were only five interviews due to major staff shortages.
16. Neighbourhood learning provision is small. A well-equipped bus used as a mobile IT centre offers an adequate range of six week introductory courses, though it is underused. Fifty-three learners have been enrolled this year, participating at 15 locations. There are too many learners returning on a new directions programme.

Leadership and management

Inadequate: Grade 4

Equality of opportunity

Contributory grade: Satisfactory: Grade 3

17. The college has a range of quality improvement processes but these are not effectively implemented or monitored in all curriculum areas. This weakness was identified at the previous inspection. The college has a good range of procedures covering the key aspects of the learner's journey. Curriculum quality improvement plans are appropriate but while senior managers discuss progress with curriculum managers this is not always effective. All learners complete a feedback questionnaire but in a number of curriculum areas no analysis of this is undertaken by the curriculum manager.
18. Processes for the observation of teaching and learning are broadly satisfactory although the effectiveness of the process to improve the quality of lessons varies between different curriculum areas. There is a tendency to overgrade at the high levels. In some curriculum areas, tutor action plans are not effectively monitored. The college has recently introduced recognising and recording progress and achievement on non-accredited courses. However, the implementation of this is very variable with some curriculum areas implementing it fully, some using the documents but not relating this to lessons and some areas not yet having implemented it at all. Similarly, while it is a college expectation that all parts of the college will plan for individual learning, some curriculum areas only record what learners have done and do not plan each individual learner's programme effectively.
19. The college has been slow to develop and implement its skills for life strategy. A strategy has recently been written but no implementation plan has been agreed. The college's three-year development plan recognises the need for a whole college approach to embed skills for life. However, there is a lack of clarity about the scope of the document with some parts of the college considering it to be relevant to the whole college and some considering only applying to the preparation for life and work curriculum area.
20. The college has an appropriate range of meetings to communicate with tutors and curriculum managers. Part-time and sessional tutors receive regular updates via letters in the register and through email.
21. The college routinely records a range of information, however this data is not effectively analysed to improve the quality of the provision. This weakness was identified at the previous inspection. Although attendance data is recorded on class registers, no analysis is done to identify any commonalities or to identify areas of concern. Questionnaires are completed by learners, but while these are analysed by some curriculum areas, no analysis is done at a cross college level.

22. Most tutors are appropriately qualified and experienced for the courses that they teach, however, a small number are teaching for which they have no qualifications. Systems for staff development are broadly satisfactory although the college does not make it a requirement for staff to undertake updating. In one area some volunteer staff have refused to take essential training. The college has had staff shortages in a number of areas for some time. One curriculum area had no manager for a period of six months and staff induction is not carried out effectively in all areas. New staff receive much good support, while in another area, the support is ineffective.
23. Governors have a wide range of skills which are helpful to the college. They appropriately challenge the college at meetings, although they are not always aware of the major problems. For example, they had not expected the LSC's notice to improve on the college's preparation for life and work provision.
24. Equality of opportunity is satisfactory. The college has recently rewritten its equality of opportunity policy and is consulting with a range of local community groups to ensure that it meets the needs of learners and the wider community. However, the policy is very detailed and no summary version for learners has been produced as yet. There is a harassment and bullying policy, but this largely relates to council employees and not learners. However, the college's student behaviour policy which all learners receive covers some of this. The college has a good range of equipment to meet the needs of those with, for example, a hearing or visual impairment. The college meets the requirements of current equality of opportunity legislation. All the college's buildings are fully accessible for wheelchair users and those with restricted mobility. The college's complaints procedures are appropriate and complaints are well-recorded and resulting actions are effectively monitored and dealt with in a timely manner.
25. The college has taken some effective actions to widen participation. Information about the ethnicity of its learners is collected and collated to identify those groups which are under-represented. It has worked with a range of partners to meet the needs of these groups, for example, the college has worked with mental illness organisations, the Nepalese community and a women's refuge. In some instances, specific courses have been introduced to meet particular needs.
26. The promotion of equality of opportunity during lessons to improve learners' understanding does not routinely take place in any curriculum area. Tutors have had no training in this, although inspectors did see some good individual examples of where aspects of equality of opportunity were successfully integrated into lessons.

What learners like:

- Helpful friendly centre
- Good class sizes so you get support needed
- 'Learn at own speed on good IT course'
- 'Like knowing our learning styles'
- 'The company and making of friends'
- 'I can now help my children with homework and reading'

What learners think could improve:

- More work on computers
- Better explanation of course content
- 'Facilities for fitting and change in needlework'
- 'Baby changing facilities'
- Colour coding for those with low literacy
- Library/ study area
- 'More practice speaking English'

Sector subject areas

Information and communication technology

Satisfactory: Grade 3

Context

27. The college offers approximately 20 day and evening courses, mostly at Grays Adult Education Centre and some in community venues. These include five-week duration courses for learners who are new to IT. Learners can progress to further introductory courses, such as using emails and the internet, or to longer courses which lead to a certificate for IT users at Levels 1 and 2.
28. In 2006/7, there were 20 courses in information and communication technology (ICT) with 330 enrolments. So far in 2007/08, 14 courses have been completed with 166 enrolments. At the time of inspection, 13 courses were operating throughout the area with 139 learners. 75% of learners are female and 22% of learners are over 60 years of age. Currently, seven part-time tutors work with the acting curriculum leader.

Strengths

- High success rates on certificate for IT users Level 1 courses
- Good use of initial assessment
- Good planning for individual learner needs

Areas for improvement

- Low success rates on certificate for IT users Level 2 courses
- Insufficient support for new staff
- Weak arrangements for the security of learners' IT files

Achievement and standards

29. Development of learners' IT skills and their standard of work are satisfactory. Learners with no previous experience of computers successfully improve their confidence in using ICT by gaining sound word-processing skills and using email. Learners also demonstrate confidence in asking and responding to questions.
30. Success rates on certificate for IT users Level 1 (CLAIT) are good at 70% which is above the national average. Success rates on very short courses during the first term this year are good at 100%, where learners progressed well towards their learning goals. There are low success rates of 41% on certificate for IT users Level 2. Retention on courses overall has improved since this time last year. Attendance at the classes seen was satisfactory at 72% and those who attended clearly enjoyed their learning.

Quality of provision

31. The quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory. Learning support for all learners in computer workshops is good. Tutors have a good knowledge of individual learners' needs

and provide a personalised approach by tailored support within the classroom. Lessons are organised so that learners can progress at their own pace using good quality instructional workbooks. Teaching is generally satisfactory, however, tutors use insufficient variety in teaching and learning methods and few collaborative activities. There is much reliance on the self-paced workbooks but the use of e-learning is developing. For example one part time tutor had devised an online quiz for learners to match icons to definitions which enabled the learners to judge their own progress. In good lessons the learners are well aware of their learning outcomes, however in weaker lessons this is not the case.

32. Assessment and monitoring of learners' progress are satisfactory. Initial assessment of learners IT skills and experience is good. Learners complete an online self-assessment of their skills which is checked through appropriate test activities. Their learning style is assessed using an online multiple-choice questionnaire after which the learner is aware of their own, and other, styles of learning. All learners keep a diary where their learning style is noted. In this diary, learners record their progress each lesson and most tutors use this for planning and writing helpful feedback. Tutors monitor attainment regularly and their records are up-to-date.
33. Computer resources in classrooms are satisfactory to support learners' needs and each computer room has an interactive whiteboard. The learners have access to computers outside the classroom in a bright airy learning centre and can access the internet in the cyber café. Printed learning resources are well prepared and there is some development of on-line learning activities, which learners enjoy. There is an inconsistent approach to the storage of learners' work electronically. For some learners, there is no secure storage or back-up of their files. There has been some loss of learners' work.
34. The range of provision is satisfactory. Programmes and activities are appropriate to meet the needs and interest of learners up to Level 2. This year, the course for IT users at Level 3 has not recruited enough learners.
35. Information, guidance and support for learners are satisfactory. There are volunteers assigned where necessary to support learners in lessons. Teachers plan appropriately for the use of these volunteers. Learners report that they get useful information about progression opportunities from their tutors. Progression rates are satisfactory, however the college does not monitor this sufficiently.

Leadership and management

36. Overall curriculum management is satisfactory. A new acting leader of the curriculum area has been in place for six weeks, however, the changes have not yet become established. Course reviews are completed for all courses satisfactorily and are used to inform the self-assessment process. The self-assessment report identifies some of the issues found at inspection. It failed to recognise that there is insufficient use made of targets and management data to improve performance, which was also an area for improvement at the previous inspection. Feedback from learners on their experience is good but is not used to inform quality improvement. The processes to recognise and record achievement are not fully implemented on some non-accredited courses.
37. There are appropriate staff development opportunities. Most staff are suitably qualified. There is insufficient support for new tutors although they have handbooks of procedures and practices. Their induction covers administrative processes however, the support for their teaching and learning does not prepare them sufficiently. There is a new mentoring

system for new tutors but this has yet to show effect. Observations of teaching and learning are satisfactory and the action plans identify training courses and staff development needs of part-time staff, who do not have appraisals. Communication with part-time tutors is satisfactory and they are invited to meetings and staff training events. There is informal sharing of learning materials.

38. Equality of opportunity is satisfactory. There is good support for learners' individual needs. However, there is insufficient focus on the promotion of equality and diversity at induction of both staff and learners.

Arts, media and publishing

Satisfactory: Grade 3

Context

39. There are 266 learners in arts, media and publishing, of whom 154 are in art and 90 learners are in crafts. Courses cover drawing, painting and textiles from Levels 1 to 3. All courses are non-accredited and part-time held in three main centres. There is one full-time curriculum manager who is responsible for this and other provision, a 0.2 fractional and 8 sessional tutors. At the time of inspection, there are 11 classes in art and six in craft, with 21 courses across the year.

Strengths

- Good development of learner skills
- Effective measures for quality improvement

Areas for improvement

- Poor progression
- Insufficient learning opportunities within the provision

Achievement and standards

40. Achievement and standards are satisfactory. There is good development of learner skills, particularly in crafts. Learners produce good quality artefacts in a range of subjects. Folders are kept, demonstrating samples and patterns used for garments and soft furnishings. Ambitious projects are in progress such as large pelmets for curtains with cutaway goblets and a large blanket decorated with cross stitch images working from photographs taken by the learner. Learners display confidence and independence in using their knowledge. Learners enjoy their work, report high levels of satisfaction and are able to work at their own pace.

41. Attendance is satisfactory at 77%. There is good monitoring and learners are contacted if they miss lessons. In 2006/07, retention was 96% in area 9, a rise of 6% from the previous year. In 2007/08, term one retention is 97%.

Quality of provision

42. Teaching and learning is satisfactory. In the better classes, tutors respond flexibly to learners working at different paces on different projects, with good demonstrations of technique and a variety of teaching strategies to engage the learner. Lesson planning is good with course outlines containing clear learning outcomes. In art, learners are taught drawing in a step-by-step approach, using basic shapes to build up the image and learn about perspective. Some tutors have very good teaching resources with wide ranges of samples for learners to examine. In the weaker classes, opportunities are missed for learners to learn from each other. These lessons are tutor centred, with an over-reliance on individual activities and lack pace and structure. The use of IT is limited.

43. There are good examples of assessment in non-accredited learning. In the better classes, there is good recording of progress and achievement with written feedback to learners

which gives detailed comments on strengths and areas for improvement. In some weaker lessons, initial assessment does not elicit sufficiently detailed information from learners to plan for individual needs effectively. In a minority of cases, the documentation to support recording of progress and achievement is present but ineffectively deployed for the benefit of learners. Learning opportunities within the provision are insufficient. Art courses, even those of longer duration, do not include any three-dimensional provision for the benefit of learners seeking a wider choice of activities with the subject. Equally in crafts, there are no other applied arts, to extend the range of learner achievement through a variety of associated subjects. There are no new media subjects.

44. Support for learners is satisfactory. There is a range of adaptive aids in use including induction loops, hearing headphones, magnifiers, magnifier lamps for close work, adjustable-height working surfaces, daylight studio lighting installed and individual lamps supplied for learners. Support for literacy, numeracy and language, when requested by learners in individual learning plans, is not picked up effectively. Tutors have attended embedded skills for life training, but there is no college wide implementation plan and records to support individual support.
45. Progression is poor. In crafts, classes are either for beginners or mixed ability with no dedicated Level 2 or 3 provision. Art is similar except for one Level 3 course. Many learners re-enrol year-on-year and most classes are a mixture of beginners and repeat learners. The percentage of new learners in the area is declining. Some course outlines contain information about progression options including rejoining the same or a similar course. There is no data on numbers of learners who progress externally in art and craft. Two dressmaking learners who were Adult Learners Week award winners, progressed to the local college to study photography as part of their business. However, there is little evidence of progression amongst recent learners.
46. Resources are satisfactory. There are good facilities at the main centre especially for crafts with good size airy rooms, new Bernina machines and overlockers, cutting tables, dummies and a jet-iron. Facilities at another centre for art are adequate. In a third centre, accommodation is poor, both for arts and crafts with little celebration of learners' achievements in displays. There are some good collections of books and resources for art and crafts. Most rooms have lockable cupboards for storing materials and equipment. Learners supply most of their own materials or buy items from the tutors. There is a budget for books, materials and items of equipment for art and textiles.

Leadership and management

47. Leadership and management are satisfactory. There are effective measures for quality improvement. Observation of teaching and learning is good, using the process to promote the recognition and recording of progress and achievement in non-accredited learning. All tutors have been observed in each of the past two years. Post observation action planning and review, paired observations and moderation are well used. Weaknesses are effectively identified by observers, and addressed in the action plan. Training is offered and taken up by tutors. Observed tutors review their lesson before the formal feedback is given. The observation profile in the self-assessment report is mainly accurate, however, there is still some overgrading.
48. The use of management information to improve quality is undeveloped. The self-assessment report is broadly accurate in the identification of priorities for improvement. Although formal training for recognising and recording progress and achievement is very recent college wide, effectively using the process is well underway. Recording of progress

and achievement was seen in most classes, sometimes both visual and written. All tutors have adequate subject qualifications but there are low levels of initial teacher training at 25%.

49. Equal opportunities are satisfactory. There is no strategy to promote equal opportunities in the classroom. Tutors attended training last year including a disability review event. Participation of minority ethnic learners in this area is lower than the college and local population percentages, although there are some younger, newly enrolled learners in craft. There is good access to all art and craft rooms.

Preparation for life and work

Inadequate: Grade 4

Context

50. There are 92 English for speakers of other languages (ESOL) learners, 47 numeracy learners and 64 literacy learners enrolled on 19 accredited courses from Entry levels to Level 2. Forty six learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities attend eight vocational and non-vocational classes. Accredited courses in confidence and personal development are also available. Courses are available during the day, evenings and weekends including a flexible programme for shift workers who require language classes. All classes are held at Grays.
51. A curriculum leader manages the provision assisted by one full-time and thirteen part-time teaching staff, two of which are senior lecturers who specialise in ESOL and literacy respectively.

Strengths

- Good use of ILT in ESOL classes

Areas for improvement

- Low success rates
- Poor attendance rates
- Insufficient attention to the needs of individual learners
- Ineffective target-setting
- Slow implementation of strategies to improve the quality of provision

Achievement and standards

52. Achievement and standards are unsatisfactory. All success rates are below national average except for numeracy Level 2 national tests at 88%, however, success rates on accredited courses are improving. The success rates on ESOL courses have improved from a low base of 28% in 2004/5 to 68% in 2006/07. Success rates on numeracy Level 1 national tests have improved from 40% to 68%. Literacy Level 1 and 2 success rates in 2006/07 remain low at 57%.
53. The standard of learners' work is mostly satisfactory. A significant number of learners progress to the next level course. Eight learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities have recently moved on to Entry level skills for life courses. Language learners on Level 2 courses develop very good communication skills through discussion and debating activities in class. Learners have sufficient opportunities to develop their language, literacy and numeracy skills in relevant contexts of the needs of the workplace.
54. Attendance is low with registers showing low and variable attendance on most courses. At the time of the inspection, it was 68%.

Quality of provision

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55. Teaching and learning are unsatisfactory. Language tutors make good use of IT to develop language skills. Images shown on the interactive whiteboards, audio tapes, videos and internet research for materials are effectively used to inform discussions and enrich the language learning experience.
56. Insufficient attention is made by tutors to develop skills needed by individual learners. Most teaching sessions are planned to meet group aims, and focused on completion of group activities. Learners work as a whole group led by the tutor on the same activities at one pace. Learning is not consistently checked and when it is questions are to the whole group. In language classes, learners get insufficient, regular opportunities to practise speaking and listening in small groups or pairs.
57. All learners have a satisfactory initial assessment. Further diagnostic work is undertaken in the first few sessions. However, individual target-setting is ineffective. The results of assessment are not consistently used to set short term specific goals for individuals on learning plans and records of progress. Frequently only group goals to meet requirements of accreditation are recorded. Insufficient attention is paid to helping learners set specific, short-term targets for developing their skills further.
58. Training plans are used as class records not for monitoring learners' progress. Targets are reviewed by tutors with learners in terms of activities completed rather than skills developed. Some learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities have some short-term targets, although these are not sufficiently planned for the overall development of learners' skills.
59. The range of provision is satisfactory. The provision has been under a notice to improve from the local LSC. Although the range of courses has decreased since the previous inspection, there has been a good introduction of skills for life courses from Entry level to Level 2. Accreditation is now offered on all ESOL, literacy, and numeracy courses.
60. In response to learner feedback, times and days of classes have been changed. In particular flexible sessions have been introduced to address the attendance patterns of shift workers in the ESOL provision.
61. Classrooms, although well-equipped with computers and interactive whiteboards are insufficiently used. Some tutors are over-reliant on paper-based worksheets. Volunteers are used to support learning in classes for adults with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, and literacy and numeracy classes, but in most cases have no specific specialist training. These learners have an in-depth initial assessment, advice and guidance from student services at the start of their programme to decide the level of support and appropriate courses. However, this does not fully inform skills development in lessons.

Leadership and management

62. Leadership and management are unsatisfactory. The implementation of strategies to improve the quality of provision has been slow. A newly appointed manager in December 2007, new to the skills for life programme area, took up the post after a six month period without a curriculum manager. A number of new curriculum and quality initiatives are

being put in place such as attendance monitoring but it is too early to judge the impact of these measures on the quality of provision. Data is insufficiently analysed to measure the impact of new processes.

63. Only three staff are qualified to Level 4 specialist national standards. The staff development policy does not address this deficiency. A significant number of staff have little or no specialist experience in working with adults with learning difficulties and/or disabilities or skills for life learners. Although sharing of good practice does take place internally on an informal basis, insufficient use is made of standards from other organisations.
64. Some staff training on issues of equality and diversity and use of IT has taken place but there is insufficient focus on updating staff in their subject specialism. Equality and diversity are not actively promoted in lessons.
65. The results of observation of teaching and learning are broadly in line with those of inspectors. However, subsequent action plans to address weaknesses are not monitored effectively. Insufficient emphasis is placed on learning. A mentoring scheme for new staff has recently been introduced but it is too early to judge the impact of this on the quality of teaching and learning. Induction focuses on administration and paperwork for individual learning plans and accreditation with too little focus on understanding the purpose of effectively monitoring learner's progress.
66. The self-assessment report does not fully address weaknesses in teaching and learning. Quality assurance processes are insufficient to address these weaknesses. Some of the weaknesses identified at the previous inspection remain.

Family Learning

Inadequate: Grade 4

Context

67. At the time of the inspection, Thurrock Borough Council offered 13 family literacy, language, and numeracy courses and one wider family learning course (family learning-learning together). The 145 learners attended courses in the centre at Grays and in 11 other venues including schools, community centres and children's centres. Learners attending

the 'Keeping up with the Children' courses are offered progression courses to the national tests. Programmes are designed to encourage parents to support their child's learning while gaining confidence in their own skills. Programmes are mainly targeted at parents of children at Foundation Stage and Key Stages 1 and 2 of the national curriculum. Ninety-two per cent of learners are female and 14% are from a minority ethnic background. No learners declared a learning difficulty and/or disability. The sector area is managed by two fractional managers and a full-time administrator. The service employs six part-time family learning teachers.

Strengths

- Good development of social and personal skills
- Good partner relationships that widen participation

Areas for improvement

- Poor success rates
- Poor attendance
- Insufficient monitoring of learner progress

Achievement and standards

68. Achievement and standards are inadequate. Learners make good progress in gaining social and personal skills. Many learners join the courses to help their children. They also improve their own literacy and/or numeracy skills and gain self-confidence. Learners are able to describe the positive impact of the course to their families, particularly with helping their children with schoolwork.

69. Success rates are poor. There is no recording of achievement data for the academic year 2006/07. At the previous inspection the issue of lack of access to accreditation was noted as a weakness and remains so. In 2006/07, from 364 enrolments, 37 achieved accredited qualifications. Family learning staff satisfactorily promote access to accreditation. Twenty four accredited achievements for 2007/08 have been moderated. The number of learners on courses leading to the national tests is small.

70. Attendance is poor. The average attendance in classes was 54%. Erratic attendance was an issue in registers in more than half of classes. There is an established system to follow up on non-attendance. Tutors do contact their learners and encourage them to attend but attendance remains low.

Quality of provision

71. Teaching and learning is satisfactory. In the best classes, learners undertake well paced and challenging activities. They are committed and engaged in their programmes of study, and often form close groups that provide ongoing support networks. Teachers make effective use of praise and encouragement. Learners engage well in discussions and respond appropriately to questions. In weaker sessions, the needs of individual learners are not being identified and addressed. Sessions are often uninspiring and worksheet based. The quality of tutor feedback to help learners improve is unsatisfactory.

72. The monitoring of learner progress is inadequate. A simplified initial assessment is completed, however there is insufficient evidence that this process informs individual

target-setting, lesson planning, or addressing individual needs. Some learners do not complete initial assessments that adequately capture their skills levels or identify their developmental needs. Target-setting is generally weak. The monitoring and recording of learners' progress was identified as a weakness during the previous inspection and the service has made slow progress in implementing improvements.

73. Resources are generally satisfactory. At the Grays Centre, there is a helpful resource bank for teachers. A well-equipped crèche that provides a facility for the local community with some agreed places available for learners. The service has six lap-tops for use in community venues. Interactive whiteboards are available at the Grays Centre although they are not effectively used to support teaching and learning. Some accommodation in the community is cramped with adults in some schools using infant sized chairs. There is a good range of provision to widen participation. Twelve different venues were used during the week of inspection, spread across the borough.
74. The support for learners is satisfactory. The sector area employs two fractional learning support assistants who both also work as family learning teachers. Learners identify a need either before the course starts via the school or family centre, or at enrolment. Learner services strive to meet the identified need if the sector area is unable to address the need directly.
75. Teachers provide effective support for learners in the classroom. The provision of information, advice and guidance both before the course and on exit is satisfactory. Learners can access advice from IAG staff and from teachers relating to progression opportunities.

Leadership and management

76. Management of the curriculum is satisfactory. There are good partner relationships that widen participation. Schools speak appreciatively of the good working relationships established with the family learning team. Headteachers appreciate the responsiveness of the team and the well organised teachers who
77. bring their own resources. Schools are able to respond to the extended schools agenda. Courses are run across the borough, targeted successfully to hard to reach groups in areas of deprivation. The sector area has established a partnership with the Local Authority and Connexions to run classes for young parents. The New Directions curriculum includes assertiveness, parenting skills and some craft skills. As a result of this project, the college has appointed an outreach worker.
78. Equality and diversity are satisfactory. The service has developed effective relationships with schools and centres in areas of deprivation. There is insufficient evidence of the active promotion of equal opportunities in teaching and learning. Some staff do not tailor work to meet the individual needs of learners in the classroom and there is insufficient attention to ongoing assessment.
79. Quality improvement is satisfactory. End of course evaluation forms are used to inform the review process. Course reviews are monitored and actions identified and used to inform the self-assessment process. The self-assessment report identified some of the areas for improvement but overgraded the provision. The curriculum managers and the staff understand the self-assessment process. Progress in implementing improvements since the previous inspection is slow. The quality of teaching and learning in the internal observation process is largely accurate, however, actions identified during the process were not effectively monitored in 2006/07 and some issues identified in action plans in 2006 are still present.
80. Support for staff is satisfactory. The small team facilitates good communication and tutors value the informal, frequent contact. Not all tutors have attended programs to recognise and record the progress of learners. There is an over-reliance on informal contacts to cascade information.
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