

Blackburne House Education

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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
- Education and training
- Preparation for life and work

Description of the provider

1. Blackburne House Education (BHE) is a unique adult and community learning provider funded by Merseyside LSC. It is located in central Liverpool, one of the most deprived wards in the area. BHE was established in 1983 to develop the skills of unemployed and low-paid women so that they were better placed to gain well-paid employment in areas where they were under-represented, more specifically in technical professions. BHE is a registered charity, recognised as working specifically with women and is therefore exempt from the relevant sections in the Sex Discrimination Act 1975. Currently 715 learners are enrolled on programmes including health, public services and care; construction; information and communication technology (ICT); hospitality; education and training; leisure; preparation for life and work, and business administration. ICT, education and training and preparation for life and work were inspected and graded. The rest of the provision was sampled and included in the overall report. As well as community provision BHE have a small number of learners on Train to Gain programmes. BHE employs 35 permanent members of staff, and additional tutors are employed on a sessional basis.
2. BHE also have a series of other operations and social enterprises, still with the focus of supporting and enhancing the core aim of the organisation. These are now set up as separate businesses. Government funding represents around 60% of the overall business for BHE.

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	Outstanding: Grade 1
Leadership and management	Good: Grade 2
Equality of opportunity	Contributory grade: Outstanding: Grade 1

Sector subject area

Information and communication technology	Good: Grade 2
Education and training	Outstanding: Grade 1
Preparation for life and work	Good: Grade 2

Overall judgement

Effectiveness of provision

Good: Grade 2

3. The overall effectiveness of BHE's provision is good. Achievements and standards and leadership and management are good. The quality of provision and arrangements for equality of opportunity are outstanding. Provision in ICT and preparation for life and work is good. In education and training it is outstanding.

Capacity to improve

Good: Grade 2

4. BHE has a good capacity to improve. In April 2007 the LSC issued notices to improve in construction, ICT, and arts, media and publishing. Long course success in these areas were below minimum levels of performance in 2005/06. Since then BHE has been making very good improvements in success rates during 2006/07. In construction, rates rose from 34% to 62% and in ICT from 55% to 70%. Progress is slower in arts, media and publishing however, BHE has now withdrawn this sector subject area.
5. Strategies to improve learner outcomes are effective. All age and duration success rates have improved by 11% to 68% in 2006/07. A good improvement of 18% has been made to all-age long course success rates to 65% in 2006/07 which is now in line with the national rate for the previous year. Success rates for all-age short courses improved to 71% in 2006/07. Retention, although much improved, is low on some courses.
6. Since the previous inspection improvements have been made to the availability and use of data. Good standards of teaching have been maintained and the observation of teaching and learning improved. The range of provision has improved and is outstanding ranging from entry level to level 4. Support for learners is outstanding. Sound financial management effectively reversed an operational deficit in 2006/07. BHE has effectively realigned its provision and is coping very well with changes in 19+ funding.
7. The self-assessment process is satisfactory. It is inclusive and involves all staff, board members, some partners, and learners' views. Staff are fully involved in quality improvement and development planning arising from the process. Actions taken are timely and effective. However, the self-assessment report has insufficiently thorough evaluation, analysis of achievement trends, qualitative evidence and systematic coverage of all key questions. Some strengths and areas for improvement identified were normal practice and some others were insufficiently identified as key strengths or areas for improvement. Grades awarded were similar to those awarded by the inspection team.

Key strengths

- Good development of skills, confidence and aspiration
- Good teaching and learning
- Excellent provision to meet the needs of learners and the community
- Particularly good and highly individualised support

- Highly effective strategies with a clear focus on the values of the organisation
- Excellent initiatives to widen participation
- Good curriculum management

Key areas for improvement

- Incomplete aspects of quality assurance

Main findings

Achievement and standards

Good: Grade 2

8. Achievements and standards are good, a strength identified in the self-assessment report. Learners develop good skills, confidence and aspirations. In health, public services and care, learners on Train to Gain develop good skills both personally and in the workplace. In construction, learners' gain in confidence and self-esteem are very good. They work well in non-traditional environments and challenge employers and team-mates well. Learners on ICT courses acquire good levels of skills and confidence. They develop good workplace skills as well as much improved communication and interpersonal skills. In education and training learners' attainment is particularly high. Standards of work are outstanding with learners showing great confidence and maturity in holding micro teaching sessions. In preparation for life and work learners develop good skills, confidence and aspirations. They are highly motivated and many overcome severe personal barriers. Learners on leisure courses gain good health benefits, with learners with physical and mental health issues gaining considerable insights into management of their individual challenges. In business, administration and law standards of work are good.
9. Most learners have a significant range of barriers to education on starting their learning. They overcome these barriers highly effectively to achieve. In some instances, they outperform their peers. For instance, 30 young learners at risk of becoming not in education, employment or training (NEET) who were taught by BHE at their school achieved their qualification. Moreover, 29 of these learners achieved five GCSE's or more at A*-C grades, exceeding the school's overall average achievements.
10. Across all courses retention is satisfactory at 82%. BHE made good improvements in retention from 2005/06 to 2006/07 with a 15% improvement in retention from one year to the next. On long courses there has been a 20% improvement. However, in preparation for life and work retention remains poor on some courses. Success rates across all courses are also satisfactory at 68%, but again with a good improvement from 2005/06 to 2006/07 with an 11% rise in success rates. In those sector subject areas, in receipt of notices to improve, BHE have significantly improved their success rates.

Quality of provision

Outstanding: Grade 1

11. The quality of provision is outstanding. Teaching and learning are good, a strength partially identified in the self-assessment report. BHE have had a range of different systems for observing teaching and learning which have been changed and modified in response to staff suggestions and external reviews. In the current 2007/08 year a new quality manager has been completing observations. Observations show an overall profile of mainly good teaching and learning with some outstanding and some satisfactory lessons. The inspection team agreed with this profile. Of the three sector subject areas specifically in scope for this inspection, all have strengths in teaching and learning. Across provision, including those subjects not specifically graded, teaching was well-organised, lively in content with a good range of methods and strategies that motivated learners well. Learners participate well, show good understanding of subject knowledge and support each other in classes. The quality of work is good and, in some areas, like teacher education, outstanding. Assessment processes are thorough with good feedback given to

learners. Recognition of achievement and progress processes are being piloted for non-accredited courses, though this accounts for a minority of provision.

12. The range of provision is outstanding. BHE is highly responsive to individuals, the wider community and employer needs. They create very good quality bespoke training packages. Employers value this responsiveness and creativity highly. Strategically BHE do excellent work to position their provision to maximise the benefits to learners and the wider community. Their strategy to develop social enterprise as a means of sustaining provision and creating training and employment for local people is excellent. Learners and employers are highly involved in changing the provision to meet their needs. BHE is highly active on many different partnerships to enable them to meet community needs, often taking a lead role. Partnership work with schools is excellent, with pupils gaining not just a qualification with BHE but making very good gains in their GCSE achievements. Courses range from entry level through to degree level courses. Recruitment of learners to level 1 provision is insufficient. However, BHE is aware of this and is planning to improve. Work with employers is excellent and matching of employers to the needs of the individual learners is very good. For example, two employers providing construction placements have a very good awareness of equality and diversity in practice and give good quality placements. Learners' success and achievements are celebrated very well. Learners take part in graduation events and are featured prominently in posters and advertisements. Enrichment activities and social events are numerous and are very motivating for learners.
13. Guidance and support for learners are outstanding. This was partially identified in the self-assessment report. Support for learners is extensive and fully integrated throughout provision. Childcare arrangements are particularly flexible to meet the individual needs of learners. Staff are extremely well matched to the needs of individuals, many having been BHE learners themselves. BHE's recruitment policy firmly revolves around recruiting staff for their attitudes and values, rather than for qualifications. Staff are very well trained to give excellent support. This is unobtrusive and individually tailored. Many sessions have learners with physical or mental illnesses. They are well-integrated within sessions. Learners are highly supportive and protective of each other. A range of adaptive technologies are used very well. Skills for life support is good. Counselling services are integrated with provision. BHE work particularly well with partners to ensure there are a range of support services to which they can refer learners. They have excellent recruitment events like open days or fun days, operate taster days so learners can try the provision, and have improved information and guidance on recruitment. The culture of the organisation is respectful, positive and highly motivational. All staff, including administrative and reception staff, are instrumental in raising the aspirations of learners to a very high level. They provide good, positive role models.

Leadership and management

Good: Grade 2

Equality of opportunity

Contributory grade: Outstanding: Grade 1

14. Leadership and management are good. The self-assessment report identified many of the strengths in leadership and management but underestimated the impact of the areas for improvement. The board and leaders set a clear strategic direction which is very well focused on BHE's core values of inspiration, transformation, independence, equality and the needs of women, providing access to education and training in order for them to

become economically independent. Strategic planning is highly effective and clearly linked to their core values and labour market information which effectively informs operational planning.

15. A wide range of very good partnerships have been developed which improve access and provide further opportunities for learners. For example, BHE leads on the 'VOLA' project which is a learning consortium within the voluntary sector. This is significantly improving capacity within the sector, and is providing local, accessible provision for the most hard to reach groups. Working with other social enterprise organisations BHE have promoted innovative approaches to tackle disadvantage through entrepreneurship. Partnerships with local schools have effectively re-engaged 14-16 pupils at high risk of exclusion and significantly improved GCSE attainment.
16. BHE's promotion of equality of opportunity is outstanding and is very effectively integrated with all aspects of provision. Most learners have multiple barriers to learning which are quickly and effectively removed through highly supportive and empathetic staff. An appropriate equality and diversity policy is reviewed annually. Arrangements for safeguarding learners aged 16-18 meet current legislative requirements. Procedures for safeguarding vulnerable adults help minimise risks and identify appropriate actions. While most of BHE is accessible to learners with mobility difficulties a few areas restrict access. Staff have a high understanding of not just equality and diversity but how to apply it to teaching sessions. Learners demonstrate a high awareness and understanding. It is fully integrated with session planning. All teaching and display materials are checked to ensure positive representations of women, people from minority ethnic communities and with disabilities. BHE are highly active in challenging employers and in changing their attitudes. BHE leads both regionally and, in some cases, nationally on matters of equality and diversity, especially in relation to gender issues.
17. An excellent range of initiatives have been very effective in widening participation. The fresh focus programme has enabled women recovering from illness to take the first steps into learning. A specific programme for minority ethnic men has improved access to careers in management. Muslim women have been successfully integrated with women's groups and many are now working towards higher level qualifications. BHE have been very effective in re-engaging learners aged 16-18, many of whom were previously NEET. Very good work with construction employers is removing barriers to women working in the industry.
18. Curriculum management is good. Team working is highly effective. Availability and use of data has improved and effectively contributes to management decisions. Good improvements have been made to success rates. Internal verification is effective. Staff attend a good range of training closely linked to BHE's priorities. All teaching staff are qualified teachers. Financial management is satisfactory. A moderate operating deficit in 2005/06 was reversed to a small surplus in 2006/07. Value for money indicators are not well developed. Resources overall are good.
19. Some aspects of the quality system are incomplete or are not fully effective. The self-assessment report is over-reliant on data driven evidence. The learner survey although useful is used excessively to the exclusion of other evidence. The observation of teaching and learning is accurate in identifying the quality of teaching but other key learner processes are not yet incorporated. Action plans from observation are not followed up promptly. The use of target-setting as a quality improvement tool is insufficiently developed. Learner surveys are only conducted on exit. The recording of achievement and

progress process is insufficiently established, however, unlike many community providers most BHE courses are externally accredited anyway.

What learners like:

- ‘They enabled me to learn, develop my self-confidence and achieve way beyond my potential’
- ‘Inspirational teachers who personalise my learning. Nothing is too much trouble for them’
- ‘The safe learning environment. I like the all women environment’
- ‘For the first time in 40 years I can speak in a group’
- ‘Teachers are very friendly and helpful’
- ‘The highly supportive learning’
- ‘The wide range of learning available, which has enabled me to progress’

What learners think could improve:

- The café is too expensive
- ‘Need car parking for learners’
- Help with transport costs to and from Blackburne House
- Higher level English for speakers of other languages (ESOL) provision
- ‘The library is not open when we need it’
- ‘The library is too cramped. Staff desks take up too much room’

Sector subject areas

Information and communication technology

Good: Grade 2

Context

20. Currently 58 learners are enrolled on six ICT courses. Courses range from entry level to foundation degree. All courses are accredited, mostly by Open College Network certification. Courses are held in two venues and range from 30 to 60 guided learning hours. Provision is available during the daytime and in the evenings. Courses are taught by four tutors, three of whom are part-time. Most learners are women with 17% being men, 6.2% of all learners have some form of disability and 26% are from a minority ethnic community. Less than 1% of learners were in the 60+ age range.

Strengths

- Good acquisition of skills and confidence
- Good teaching and learning
- Good range of provision to meet the needs of learners
- Good support for learners
- Very good promotion of equality of opportunity

Areas for improvement

- Insufficient co-ordination between learning in ICT and ESOL

Achievement and standards

21. Achievements and standards are good. Learners acquire good skills and gain in confidence. Most learners start with little or no experience of computers and quickly learn to use features of the software confidently. Many learners are disadvantaged and overcome a number of barriers to learning. Learners make good gains in confidence with support from tutors. They gain valuable work related skills both in sessions and on placement. Tutors make effective links between the skills being taught and skills required for employment. Work placements are good. Employers are given a list of subjects covered in the course and provide good opportunities for learners to develop these skills. Clear links are made between on- and off-the-job training, and skills taught in sessions are reinforced in the workplace.

22. Overall achievement is satisfactory. Retention rates in 2005/06 were low at 61%. They improved to a satisfactory level in 2006/07. Retention in the current year is good at 97%. Achievement rates were low in 2005/06 at 51% but improved in 2006/07 to 69%. Success rates for the last three years have been above national benchmarks.

Quality of provision

23. Teaching and learning are good. Tutors set clear objectives that are shared with learners. Tutors use good questioning and class discussion to develop learning well. They use a variety of learning methods and all learners are fully engaged. In one class, effective use

of group work enabled learners to discuss features of the software that they are confident with and features that they need to know more about. Support materials are well produced, clear and easy to follow. In all sessions learners are encouraged to take responsibility for their own learning and can confidently explain and demonstrate features of the software. Working relationships are good and learners feel confident to ask questions to enhance their learning. Learners provide good support for each other and encourage each other to learn and understand. Learners receive clear feedback on work which enables them to see where they can improve. Individual learning plans are satisfactory.

24. Co-ordination between learning in ICT and ESOL is insufficient. Where learners attend both ICT and ESOL classes communication between tutors is insufficient to reinforce ESOL learning in the ICT class.
25. The range of provision to meet the needs of learners is good. BHE provides a wide range of courses from entry to degree level and learners progress well through these courses. Learners attend for a wide range of reasons. Many learners have been out of education for a long time or have no qualifications. BHE effectively meets the needs of these learners. Courses provide good opportunities at the appropriate level, to gain skills and confidence. Good quality placements allow learners to develop valuable work related skills and gain experience. Links with work placements are good and ensure that employers' needs are met. Learners enjoy their experience of learning and take part in a number of enrichment activities which enhance their learning.
26. Support for learners is good. Many learners have children. Childcare arrangements are very flexible and comprehensive to meet their many differing needs. BHE provides extra childcare to enable learners to stay in learning for longer periods, they pay relatives to give childcare where that is more appropriate and also provide after school clubs. Tutors provide good individual support. They come into sessions early to allow learners to practise and give extra sessions for learners who miss sessions. Provision for learners with additional needs is good. BHE provides wheel chair accessible desks, large keyboards and screen magnification software. Tutors are well trained to support the specific needs of learners. They monitor learners' progress closely and provide extra individual support when required. Initial advice and guidance is satisfactory. Learners receive appropriate advice and guidance on courses and on career and progression opportunities.

Leadership and management

27. Leadership and management are good. Equality of opportunity is very well promoted. Equality and diversity are firmly established in all aspects of provision. BHE has a strong culture of diversity and inclusiveness. The centre provides a welcoming and supportive atmosphere for a range of learners with a wide range of disadvantages. All literature promotes equality in a positive way. Classrooms contain positive images of women and learner success is celebrated in wall displays throughout the centre. Tutors take care to promote equality and diversity in sessions. Learners' achievements are regularly celebrated in other ways, for example some learners celebrate achievement with a meal paid for by BHE. BHE works effectively with a wide range of partner organisations. Links with local colleges are good. Partnerships with support agencies to provide support for a range of groups such as lone parents and asylum seekers are good. Management information is used satisfactorily. Resources are good. Retention is improved but it is too early to assess the full effectiveness of new monitoring processes. Initial assessment of learners is satisfactory and support for literacy and numeracy is well integrated with ICT sessions. BHE has satisfactory processes to recognise and record achievement. Quality

assurance systems are satisfactory. The self-assessment process is satisfactory. It is inclusive and the views of learners are well considered. Although staff are consulted, these views are not used sufficiently in the self-assessment report. Assessment of achievement and standards relies too heavily on achievement data. No assessment is made of gains in skills and confidence achieved by learners.

Education and training

Outstanding: Grade 1

Context

28. A new framework of programmes replaced BHE's old courses in teaching and training this year in accordance with a national initiative. Currently 74 learners are on education and training courses of whom 18 have already completed their courses. Sixty-nine learners are on level 3 preparing to teach in the lifelong learning sector awards (PTLLS). Five learners are working towards the level 4 certificate in teaching in the lifelong learning sector (CTLTS) teaching qualifications. All the courses are part-time and are taught by four full-time members staff, although only two are currently teaching these programmes. Courses are given at Blackburne House both during the daytime and in the evenings. Most learners are women, 15% have some form of disability and 20% are from a minority ethnic community.

Strengths

- Extremely high standard of attainment by learners
- Outstanding teaching and learning
- Very good support for learners
- Very good promotion of equal opportunities

Areas for improvement

- None identified

Achievement and standards

29. Achievement and standards are outstanding. Attainment of learners is extremely high. Learners on both PTLLS and CTLTS programmes demonstrate a very good understanding for their level of the theories that underpin successful teaching. Learners talk highly confidently and critically about the subject. They show tremendous enthusiasm for teaching but are also aware of the challenges that face them. PTLLS learners' giving half-hour mini sessions to their peer groups demonstrate particularly developed skills. Learners are able to teach confidently and enthusiastically and they successfully use a wide range of techniques. Their sessions were all good or better when judged against standards normally applied to experienced teachers. Assessment and verification are carried out thoroughly. Feedback is detailed, evaluative and used highly effectively to develop good practice. Peer assessment is challenging and highly constructive.

30. Retention and achievement are satisfactory. Retention of learners in 2005/06 averaged 72%. However, these were completely different qualification frameworks. In the last complete year, 2006/07, again with a different framework, retention rose to 86%, the pass rate to 90% and success rates 76%. However, past trends have less significance since the current programmes are new. Progress on the current framework is very good.

Quality of provision

31. Teaching and learning are outstanding. Sessions are very well planned and have an interesting range of activities appropriate to the learners. Learners have a particularly high

level of involvement in session activities. Learners and tutors work together as a team to achieve the aims of the session. Recognition of the individual needs of learners is excellent, with planning and teaching that highly effectively meet these needs. Very good use is made of a range of resources and equipment. Power-point presentations are used selectively to illustrate specific points and they enhance aspects of the teaching. Tutors and learners have high expectations. Tutors expect learners to strive for improvement and learners respond very well. Teaching takes learners far beyond the levels required for their programme. Assessment practices are varied and highly effective in raising standards. Feedback is particularly detailed and useful to learners to develop. Peer assessment is highly effective in developing critical appreciation and communication skills. Some learners on the PTTLS programme have insufficient opportunities to gain teaching experience during the programme beyond the mini sessions to their peer group.

32. These new programmes successfully meet the needs of employers and learners, though it is very early to assess the impact on the sector. Good selection processes ensure that learners start appropriate qualifications. Ongoing tutorials help learners to better understand the requirements of the course and motivate them to want to learn more. They actively challenge tutors to change the sessions to meet their individual needs. Learners on placements are well-matched to the employer's needs.
33. The support for learners is excellent. Learners trust their tutors and are confident of help if they have difficulties. Tutors give very thorough initial and ongoing interviews to ensure that any support needs are identified in a timely and non-patronising way. Tutors provide support and direct help, or arrange for learners to obtain specialist support from other agencies quickly and discreetly. Learners are readily able to access help outside the working day. BHE provide childcare facilities for learners, either in their own crèche or using other services where more appropriate. BHE and its staff are dedicated to providing any support necessary to enable their clients to become successful learners. Learners with disabilities are well-integrated within groups, with tutors and peers giving good, discreet support in a highly appropriate way. Materials and equipment are well-adapted to meet individual learners' needs. Learning is planned to maximise the participation of individuals regardless of any support required. Support for skills for life is satisfactory. Information, advice and guidance are good. It is readily accessible and learners have very good access to individual sessions for advice. All materials are produced in a format showing positive images of women.

Leadership and management

34. Leadership and management are good. The promotion of equality of opportunity is very good. Tutors are highly knowledgeable and have high awareness of issues related to equality and diversity. As well as directly planning elements of equality into teaching sessions, they take every opportunity to subtly reinforce learning points during sessions in discussions. Learners have a high awareness of equality and diversity and are keen to include it in their micro teaching sessions. Teaching and display materials all promote positive images of women, people from minority ethnic backgrounds and people with disabilities. Learners are encouraged to share problems and this often leads to open frank discussions which help other learners understand more about specific health or disability related problems.
35. The four staff in this area work closely together to manage the programmes. Regular standardisation meetings take place and the staff have frequent discussions with their line manager. Teachers have appropriate qualifications and experience. Teachers and line

managers identify their need for professional development and management are supportive in meeting these needs. There has been considerable development through outside courses and seminars to ensure the successful implementation of the new teacher qualification framework. Resources are good.

36. The self-assessment process is satisfactory. Issues or action points arising from meetings are managed well. However, they are not included in the formal self-assessment report.

Preparation for life and work

Good: Grade 2

Context

37. BHE provides courses in ESOL, key skills, numeracy, careers and jobsearch for young women aged 16-18, personal development courses for young women aged 16-18 and courses for women returning to learning following physical or mental illness. Currently 263 learners are enrolled of whom 84% are women, 51% are from minority ethnic groups and 5% have a declared disability. A quarter of learners are aged 16-18 most of whom have no previous qualifications and have experienced significant educational and social barriers. ESOL constitutes over 50% of the provision and numeracy 3%. Around 22% of learners attend key skills provision and around 25% of learners attend personal development and jobsearch programmes. ESOL is given at a range of levels from entry to level 2 with some classes targeting 16-18 learners. Learners work towards the national tests in ESOL and numeracy. On the personal development courses learners gain recognised qualifications from the Open College Network. In some courses they also attend work placements for work experience. All courses are accredited. Most of the provision is women only but some mixed gender classes take place at a nearby community centre. All the classes take place during the daytime. Most learners attend twice each week.

Strengths

- Good development of skills, confidence and aspiration
- Very good teaching and learning
- Excellent support for learners
- Very good promotion of equality and diversity

Areas for improvement

- Poor retention on some courses

Achievement and standards

38. Achievements and standards are good. Learners develop good learning, personal and social skills that they use in their everyday lives. In numeracy classes they calculate the costs of ingredients when planning meals for their family for the week. The standard of learners' work is very good and it is acknowledged and well celebrated. For example, learners on a personal development course produced a book of their poetry and creative writing which was produced to a professional level. Learners' aspirations are raised through high expectations, support and by challenging preconceived ideas about future potential and destinations. Learners effectively gain self-esteem and confidence to progress to higher levels and to other courses. Learners aged 16-18 on personal development programmes gain significant life skills, confidence and ambition to go on to further learning, employment or training. Learners develop transferable skills and a positive attitude towards other learning.

39. Retention is poor on some courses, however, it has improved over the last two years. This was accurately identified in the self-assessment report. Between 2005/06 and 2006/07 retention improved by 14%. BHE targets and recruits learners who face many barriers to

their participation, for example, women who have experienced domestic violence, have mental or physical health issues or who have significantly low self-esteem. A significant proportion of the 16-18 learners have been identified as NEET. BHE are aware of the retention issue and have strategies in place to resolve this. For the current year, the overall retention rate has improved further, but this is an incomplete year.

Quality of provision

40. Teaching and learning are very good. They are well structured and tutors provide a wide range of teaching and learning activities which motivate the learners. The pace of the sessions is good and learners are well motivated through high levels of interaction and encouragement. BHE has high expectations of learners to work hard in sessions and to complete additional work between sessions. Tutors make good use of ICT to support learning. Tutors use tape recordings well to provide a range of conversations and accents in ESOL provision to challenge learners' listening and comprehension skills. In the careers and personal development courses learners produce their own CDs. Ongoing assessment of learner progress throughout sessions is good. Initial and diagnostic assessment in ESOL provision to accurately place the learner in the right class is good. Individual learning plans are used appropriately to record and monitor progress.
41. Programmes and activities meet the needs and interests of the learners well. BHE identifies and targets those learners who are socially excluded, at risk and have no or few previous qualifications. They give a range of different opportunities in career, personal and social development. No literacy courses are provided and very limited numeracy provision is available at entry level however, a large local provider provides these courses. Enrichment activities are good. Learners attend educational visits, social events and yoga and relaxation sessions. The celebration of learner achievement is very good. All learners attend a graduation ceremony and photographs and displays of learners' achievements are displayed throughout the building.
42. Support for learners is excellent. BHE attracts many learners who face significant barriers to learning. Many of the learners aged 16-18 have been previously identified as NEET and at risk. Learners all have support tutors who hold regular individual tutorials to monitor academic progress and to provide both individual and help them access more specialist support. Childcare provision is very good and is either directly provided at BHE or paid for by BHE. Learners have access to a library where they can access jobsearch help, the use of the ICT centre and access to support for dyslexia. Counselling support is available for learners who need it. BHE provides the funds for learners to have a specialist assessment to identify additional learning needs such as dyslexia. ESOL learners also attend a reading group where they can develop their reading and communication skills outside of their normal sessions.

Leadership and management

43. Leadership and management are good. The promotion of equality and diversity is very good. Displays in classrooms show culturally diverse images, teaching resources reflect the diversity of the learners and topics used for discussion are inclusive. Stereotypes are challenged. Designated prayer and quiet rooms are available and special consideration is given to learners during religious festivals. Dyslexia needs are identified and provided for. BHE place a strong emphasis on promoting values and respect which form part of both learner and staff induction. Managers communicate well with their tutors. Good practice is shared through team meetings and through briefing papers provided by those attending

training. Managers have very high expectations of learners and these are communicated to all staff and learners contributing to creating a culture of aspiration. Accommodation and resources are good.

44. Quality assurance processes, including self-assessment, are satisfactory. Observations are accurate, make clear judgements about the quality of learning and identify areas for improvement. The self-assessment report accurately identified the main issue of poor retention and the development plan included strategies to improve retention and achievement.