

Milton Keynes 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' monitoring 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
- Visual Arts
- Classical and Modern Foreign Languages
- Preparation for Life and Work
- Family Learning

Description of the provider

1. Milton Keynes Council (MKC) provides adult and community learning through its adult and community education (ACE) service, part of the neighbourhood service directorate. It contracts directly with Thames Valley LSC. Five managers report to the head of service. Eight lead tutors and 250 part-time tutors and assessors deliver the provision.
2. In Milton Keynes, most employment is in the service industries. The proportion of learners with a National Vocational Qualification (NVQ) at level 2 or above is lower than in the south-east and nationally. In 2007/08, ACE offered mostly non-accredited and some accredited provision for 5,773 learners from entry level to level 3. At the time of inspection, 2,136 learners were enrolled on non-accredited courses and 1,110 on accredited courses. Approximately 13% are from a minority ethnic background, a higher proportion than that locally. Most learners are aged 25 to 60 and 3.6% have a learning difficulty and/or disability.
3. ACE offers provision in 15 sector subject areas. A small amount of provision is offered in work-based learning for adults. Classes are taught at centres in Stony Stratford, Bletchley, Milton Keynes and at 80 other locations.

Summary of grades awarded

Effectiveness of provision	Satisfactory: Grade3
Capacity to improve	Good: Grade 2
Achievement and standards	Satisfactory: Grade3
Quality of provision	Satisfactory: Grade3
Leadership and management	Satisfactory: Grade3
Equality of opportunity	Contributory grade: Good: Grade2

Sector subject areas

Information and communication technology	Satisfactory: Grade3
Visual arts	Good: Grade2
Classical and modern foreign languages	Satisfactory: Grade3
Preparation for life and work	Satisfactory: Grade3
Family learning	Satisfactory: Grade3

Overall judgement

Effectiveness of provision

Satisfactory Grade 3

4. Overall effectiveness is satisfactory. Achievement and standards are satisfactory. Learners develop good social and workplace skills. Success rates on most accredited short and long courses have significantly improved, but remain satisfactory overall. Achievement of learning outcomes on non-accredited courses is satisfactory. Standards of work overall are satisfactory. Attendance is satisfactory.
5. The quality of provision is satisfactory overall. Teaching and learning are satisfactory. Initial assessment is satisfactory. The use of resources and assessment are satisfactory. Target-setting and the recording of learners' achievement is inadequate on many courses. Programmes and activities meet the needs and interests of learners in the community well. Social and educational inclusion is good. The provision attracts learners from diverse backgrounds, which reflect the communities that ACE serves. Advice, guidance and support are satisfactory. Learners generally feel that they are on the right course.
6. Leadership and management are satisfactory. ACE has sustained and developed useful partnerships which promote learning well in Milton Keynes. Equality of opportunity is good. Leaders set a clear direction for the organisation. Managers have improved ACE's quality assurance arrangements. The observation of teaching and learning scheme has supported improvements in teaching and learning, though some learning sessions are over-graded. ACE meets current requirements for safeguarding. The organisation is satisfactorily implementing a Skills for Life strategy. The implementation of a procedure to recognise and record learners' progress and achievement is incomplete.

Capacity to improve

Good: Grade 2

7. Capacity to improve is good. ACE has significantly raised success rates on accredited courses. Retention on non-accredited courses has significantly improved. ACE has fully or partially met all of the key challenges identified at the previous inspection. Quality assurance processes, judged inadequate at the previous inspection, have significantly improved. ACE has successfully reduced the proportion of inadequate teaching. The teaching and learning observation scheme is much improved. Inspection grades have improved since the previous inspection. The organisation's culture of continuous improvement is shared with staff and understood by all.
8. The self-assessment process is consultative and broadly accurate. It is critical and contains useful information and judgements for planning improvements in provision. The 2007/08 report is a considerable improvement on the previous year's self-assessment. It contains clear and well-supported judgements about the quality of provision. Quality improvement plans are good.

Key strengths

- Good range of courses to meet community needs
- Particularly effective strategic management
- Good partnership working

- Good promotion of equality of opportunity

Key areas for improvement

- Low success rates at level 2 on accredited courses
- Incomplete implementation of procedures to recognise and record learners' progress and achievement
- The proportion of good or better teaching

Main findings

Achievement and standards

Satisfactory Grade 3

9. Achievement and standards are satisfactory. This is acknowledged in the self-assessment report. Success rates on accredited courses are satisfactory overall. Success rates on accredited short courses and on level 1 long courses have significantly improved and are now satisfactory.
10. Provisional data held by the provider indicates that success rates on NVQ programmes are high. Achievement and retention on non-accredited courses is generally satisfactory. Learners on non-accredited beginners' courses attain good skills and make good progress. Differences in performance between groups of learners are not statistically significant. Learners produce satisfactory standards of work on most courses. Attendance is satisfactory.
11. Success rates on accredited courses at level 2 are low. The number of learners on these courses is relatively small.

Quality of provision

Satisfactory Grade 3

12. The quality of provision overall is satisfactory, as recognised in the self-assessment report. Teaching and learning are satisfactory. In the most effective lessons, tutors provide good activities which challenge and develop learners' knowledge and skills well. Learners generally enjoy their classes. The use of resources in learning sessions is satisfactory. Initial assessment is satisfactory and provides appropriate identification of learners needs relevant to the course they are attending. Assessment and internal verification are satisfactory.
13. The implementation of procedures to recognise and record progress and achievement in non-accredited learning is incomplete. Learning objectives are well- defined and attainable in some curriculum areas. Learners are satisfactorily assessed and tutors provide adequate feedback on their progress and achievement. In other curriculum areas, learning targets are inadequate and it is unclear whether learners have achieved their learning objectives.
14. Programmes meet the needs of learners well. This is recognised in the self-assessment report. ACE offers a good range of courses to meet community needs. Learners can study courses from entry level to level 3. The council regards adult and community learning a high priority. ACE managers thoroughly evaluate community needs. Social inclusion is good. Particular emphasis is placed on engaging hard to reach learners. ACE is successful at attracting a high proportion of new learners.
15. Advice, guidance and support are satisfactory. ACE has achieved a national award for the quality of its information, advice and guidance. Learners receive clear and detailed advice about courses before they enrol. Support arrangements for learners with additional learning needs are satisfactory.

Leadership and management

Satisfactory: Grade 3**Equality of opportunity**

Contributory grade: Good Grade 2

16. Leadership and management overall are satisfactory. Strategic management is particularly effective. Senior managers at MKC understand adult and community learning well. They provide very good support to staff in ACE. Communication between different council directorates is good. Senior managers set a clear direction which they communicate well to managers and staff. Strategic plans are clear, effective and well-monitored against clear defined objectives. The council has successfully managed a restructuring of the adult and community education service. ACE responds promptly to the learning needs of the community and to challenges such as cuts in adult and community learning funding. It pays good attention to the views and requests of learners and implements curriculum changes to meet demand. ACE manages and allocates resources well.
17. Partnership working is good. Communication between different directorates within the council is good. The recent relocation of ACE to the neighbourhood services directorate has enabled it to develop productive working relationships with other key community workers. ACE has helped establish the Milton Keynes Economic and Learning Partnership and the Milton Keynes Learning Action Network, which is developing good community learning strategies. The learning action network links ACE's Skills for Life work, its non-accredited programmes and voluntary sector organisations in the community well. Partnership working with a local residential home has helped older residents in a remote area to benefit from an information, communication, technology (ICT) learning programme.
18. Promotion of equality of opportunity is good, as recognised in the self-assessment report. ACE is very successful at engaging learners from groups that are often under-represented in learning. It has introduced successful strategies to recruit male learners, such as the 'Bring Your Dad' initiative. Minority ethnic groups are well-represented on many learning programmes. ACE's promotion of courses to learners not engaged in education, employment or training is effective. ACE uses data to plan provision and evaluate the performance of learners from different groups. ACE celebrates learner success very well at an annual event attended by local celebrities. ACE has recently established an active disability advisory group. The Skills for Life strategy is comprehensive and acknowledges the national and the local context. MKC has signed a skills pledge to support all staff to gain literacy and numeracy qualifications at level 2.
19. Procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements. Criminal records bureau (CRB) checks are carried out on all staff. ACE maintains an up-to-date central record of these checks. The accountability of roles and responsibilities for safeguarding are clearly defined and a senior manager has overall responsibility. Appropriate risk management and safety procedures are in place.
20. The use of management information is satisfactory overall. ACE has implemented a new management information system and uses it effectively to manage the provision. Managers use data to make decisions about the financial viability of courses and to monitor recruitment and success rates. However, the use of management information at curriculum level is not yet established. Many curriculum areas do not effectively implement processes to recognise and record learners' progress and achievement in non-accredited learning. ACE managers do not have complete confidence in the reliability of success rates on non-accredited courses.

21. Staff are suitably qualified and experienced. ACE provides good support for staff for their continuing professional development. Accommodation for arts and crafts courses is good. Learning centres are well-equipped. Teaching rooms and resources at other venues are satisfactory.
22. Provision has improved since the previous inspection. ACE has worked well to improve quality assurance arrangements. It has produced a clear quality improvement strategy that is owned by all staff. Quality issues are a key agenda item at all meetings. Targets for quality improvement are clear and monitored through team meetings. A peer review group, which includes other local learning providers, has met to moderate self-assessment judgements and observations of teaching and learning. This group actively promotes quality improvement and the sharing of good practice. Most of the key challenges identified at the previous inspection have been met. The self-assessment process is inclusive and critical.
23. The proportion of teaching that is good or better is lower than the service's expectations. ACE's observation of the teaching and learning scheme has supported improvements in the overall quality of learning sessions and inadequate teaching is now at a minimum. Much teaching is satisfactory. Actions to help tutors improve their practice are recorded and monitored after observation. However, the grade given by the observer does not always match the text of the observation report. A minority of learning sessions is over-graded.

What learners like:

- 'I've learnt so much in such a short time'
- 'I've gained the confidence to do some really fancy prints'
- 'I've gained enough confidence to go into the computer and find out about things'
- 'I like knowing where I am in my learning'
- 'The tutor makes learning fun'
- 'I can see now that I can crack this French'
- 'We have a good tutor and enjoy learning together'
- 'I shifted my work around so I could come to this class'
- 'As parents we don't have time to learn, so this is a good opportunity'
- Sessions are at convenient times and locations
- Like discussing problems with other parents

What learners think could improve:

- 'The poor marketing of some courses'
- 'Sometimes classes are too large'
- 'Layout of computer room was wrong'
- 'I don't get feedback and see tutor's comments once form has gone in'
- 'We don't like the form filling'
- 'The number of days and classes - we'd like more'
- 'The amount of paperwork at the beginning - there's too much of it'

Sector subject areas

Information and communication technology

Satisfactory: Grade 3

Context

24. During 2007/08, 418 learners enrolled on 71 courses. Of these, 33% were male and 10% were from a minority ethnic group. Some 35% were aged over 60 and 5.5% declared a disability. Currently, 108 learners attend 12 information and ICT classes at level 1 and 2. Non-accredited courses are taught in two hour sessions over two to eight weeks. Classes are taught in the day and evening. A few classes are offered on weekends. Learners can also follow flexible accredited or non-accredited programmes delivered in two or two and a half hour sessions every week. Sessions are offered at the service's three centres and at a range of community venues. A part-time curriculum development officer and a part-time lead tutor manage the provision. Nine hourly-paid tutors deliver the learning sessions.

Strengths

- High retention
- Good range of courses to meet learner needs

Areas for improvement

- Inadequate monitoring and recording of learners' progress

Achievement and standards

25. Achievement and standards are satisfactory. Retention is high. In the last three years, retention has improved from 50% in 2005/06 to 94% in 2007/08. Achievement on non-accredited courses is satisfactory. Attendance is satisfactory. The standard of learners' work is satisfactory. Learners' attainment of information and communication technology skills is satisfactory. Learners generally enjoy their learning sessions

Quality of provision

26. The quality of provision overall is satisfactory. Teaching and learning are satisfactory. Tutors promote the use of learning resources well. In better sessions, tutors manage the pace and change of activities well. They provide good challenge for learners. Tutors develop good working relationships and learners feel comfortable in trying out new processes and in learning from mistakes. Tutors give good individual support to learners, yet allow them time to learn independently. They give clear demonstrations of software processes. However, some teaching is uninspiring.
27. Tutors' monitoring and recording of learners' progress is inadequate. Tutors' recording of the progress that learners make in learning sessions is poor. Evidence of assessment is limited. Tutors' paperwork does not clearly identify which learners have achieved their learning goals or how course objectives were achieved. On some courses, learners leave without any record of their achievement.

28. The range of courses to meet learners' needs is good. Consultation with tutors and learners is used to decide the range of courses that are offered. The range of ICT subjects is good, covering office applications, the internet and digital media. Taught courses are available at a range of times to suit learners. Intensive day long sessions are also offered. The provision of flexible drop-in sessions help to support learners develop their skills.

29. Advice, guidance and support are satisfactory. The availability of technology to support disabled learners is adequate. Tutors offer screen adjustments to assist learners with impaired vision. Support is available to learners with additional literacy, numeracy and language needs. Learners receive an appropriate induction at their first session. A good range of advice and guidance is available to learners before they enrol. However, not all learners take up this opportunity and a small minority enrol on an inappropriate or unsuitable course.

Leadership and management

30. Leadership and management are satisfactory overall. ACE provides good support for new tutors. They receive a comprehensive induction programme and a good tutor handbook, which contains useful templates and guidance. Support for tutors' continuing professional development activities is good. Observation of teaching and learning is ineffective. Comments on observation reports are too brief. The records contain insufficient comments about the skills that learners are developing. Judgements do not support the grades given.

31. Resources are satisfactory. Teaching rooms contain industry standard information technology (IT) hardware and software. Tutors are adequately qualified and experienced.

32. The self-assessment process is satisfactory. Tutors contribute their views and provide data for self-assessment but their formal involvement in self-assessment activity is limited. The report is appropriately judgemental. Inspectors agreed with many of the judgements, although some of the key strengths are over-stated. Equality of opportunity is adequately promoted.

Visual arts

Good: Grade 2

Context

33. Visual arts is part of a wider arts, media and publishing curriculum offer which accounts for over 25% of ACE's current total provision. The vast majority of courses is non-accredited. At the time of inspection, 840 learners were enrolled on visual arts courses. Of these, 25% were male, 20% aged over 60 and 13% from a minority ethnic group. Learning sessions take place in 20 community centres, church halls, galleries, schools, and specialist arts and crafts facilities across Milton Keynes. A curriculum development coordinator manages this area of learning, which employs 51 part-time tutors.

Strengths

- High standard of learners' work
- Good progress by beginners
- High achievement rate on level 1 courses
- Good challenge for individual learners
- Good range of provision

Areas for improvement

- Inadequate monitoring and recording of individual learners' progress

Achievement and standards

34. Achievement and standards are good. Learners' work is of a high standard. In digital photography, learners experiment skilfully with lights to produce the effect of candlelight on a group of antique objects. In calligraphy, learners' use their skills to produce complex illustrated texts. A silversmithing learner has commissioned work to make items of jewellery using the new skills attained in class. Learners describe classes they attend as a lifeline, which develops their interest in art, as well as providing them with an opportunity to meet and talk to like-minded peers.
35. Beginners make good progress. They quickly gain technical skills in visual arts and enjoy their courses. They soon grow in confidence and self-esteem. Learners use their new skills well to make dresses, shirts and ceramic products. Some learners confidently exhibit their work at the end of the year.
36. Achievement rates are consistently high on the small amount of level 1 accredited provision. In 2007/08 they were 100%. Attendance is satisfactory.

Quality of provision

37. The quality of provision is good. Teaching and learning overall are satisfactory. Tutors provide good challenge for individual learners. The quality of one-to-one teaching and tutors' verbal feedback to learners is good. Tutors make positive suggestions for improvements. They give good demonstrations of practical techniques, with many helpful hints and tips. They are enthusiastic to share their knowledge and skills. During learning sessions, learners are purposefully supported to develop their own artistic style. Tutors use email well to provide extra support and help for learners. In a few sessions, tutors provide an insufficient variety of activities and demonstrate limited teaching strategies.
38. Tutors inadequately monitor and record individual learner progress. Assessment and monitoring activities are poorly understood. Some tutors do not comply with ACE's procedures for recognising and recording progress and achievement. Tutors set goals but do not always monitor progress. Individual learning plans are insufficiently meaningful and recorded evidence of learners' completed work is mostly unimaginative.
39. ACE meets the needs and interests of learners well. The range of provision is good. Courses are offered at level 1,2 and 3 in a range of subjects at times that suit learners. Managers continually review the curriculum to attract new learners. ACE's effective partnerships provide learners with access to specialist arts workshops at Great Linford and gallery space in Milton Keynes. ACE has developed a useful new initiative with an art therapy organisation based at a local hospital. It has completed good, creative partnership projects, called 'Reaching Out' and 'Moving On', to promote participation in learning by those currently not in education, training or employment.
40. Advice, guidance and support for learners are satisfactory. Tutors know their learners well and are sensitive to their needs. Extra support is available where needed. For instance, in one class, a learner with back problems was provided with a higher working surface.

Leadership and management

41. Leadership and management are satisfactory. Communication between the manager and tutors is good. Tutors feel well supported. Attendance at meetings is low. However, records of meetings are emailed to all staff. The observation of teaching and learning system supports improvements in the quality of teaching. Grades are generally accurate. Tutors benefit from carrying out peer observations and sharing good practice. However, personal development targets, such as more advanced teacher training or subject-specific professional development are not always met.
42. Accommodation at arts centres and specialist rooms in local schools are good. One local arts centre is equipped with a ceramics studio, a silversmithing workshop and a woodcarving workshop. Classes take place in schools and community venues in the heart of residential areas. Specialist ICT equipment, such as an interactive whiteboard, is available at one centre. Equality and diversity are satisfactory. Inspection judgements mostly matched those in the self-assessment report.

Classical and modern foreign languages

Satisfactory: Grade 3

Context

43. ACE offers 49 courses in 11 languages. Most classes are of two hours' duration and are taught in the evening. Learners can study at entry level, and at level 1, 2 or 3. Fifteen % of the provision is accredited. Of the 788 learners enrolled in 2007/08, 37% were male and 13% were aged over 60. Some 24% were from a minority ethnic background and 3% declared learning or physical disability. At the time of inspection, 492 learners were enrolled on programmes. Classes are held at two main centres and six community venues. The curriculum manager is responsible for languages provision. A team of 26 hourly-paid tutors deliver the learning sessions.

Strengths

- High achievement rates on accredited foreign language courses

Areas for improvement

- Inadequate monitoring of learner progress on non-accredited courses

Achievement and standards

44. Achievement and standards are satisfactory. Achievement rates on accredited foreign language courses are high. The achievement rate in GCSE Spanish in 2006/07 was 80%. At A-level, the achievement rate was 89%. The results for 2007/08 show continued improvement. GCSE achievement rates rose to 85% and success rates improved from 62% in 2006/07 to 83%. The success rates for British Sign Language at level 1 and 2 have improved and are now satisfactory.
45. The standard of learners' work on non-accredited courses is satisfactory. Learners develop adequate language skills and understanding of the culture and history of the country whose language they are learning. Attendance is generally satisfactory

Quality of provision

46. The quality of provision is satisfactory. The quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory. In good sessions, the taught language is used effectively. Learning activities are well-planned and learners have good opportunities to practice their language skills. Some centres are well-equipped with a good range of resources, such as open learning centres, interactive whiteboards and audio visual materials. In the less effective sessions, the tutor and learners communicate mainly in English rather than in the taught language. Learners do not receive sufficient opportunities to practice speaking and listening in the taught language.
47. The monitoring of learner progress on non-accredited courses is inadequate. Learners complete a record of achievement document, but this provides insufficient detail of the learners' skills and learning needs on entry and exit to the programme. Final assessment reports lack meaningful evaluation of progress made and insufficient tutor judgements on whether goals have been achieved. In many classes, learners do not receive sufficient feedback on the quality of their language skills.
48. ACE provides a good range of programmes to meet the needs and interests of learners. The range of language provision is good. ACE offers classes in languages such as Polish

and Mandarin Chinese, which are not offered elsewhere. The service responds well to requests for new provision. For example, a lip-reading class was recently established in partnership with a hospital audiology department. A good range of provision is available to meet the needs of learners who have a second home abroad or whose partner speaks another language and members of minority ethnic groups who wish to improve their ability to speak their heritage language.

49. Advice, guidance and support for learners overall are satisfactory. Support for learners is satisfactory. One tutor has set up a website from which learners can download language learning materials. They can also communicate with their tutor and each other through the website. Tutors handle the needs of learners with sensory impairments sensitively. Information and guidance on courses are satisfactory. However, course descriptions and titles do not always give sufficient information about the content and level of the course. Learners do not always receive timely notification when classes are cancelled.

Leadership and management

50. Leadership and management are satisfactory. The management of change is satisfactory. ACE has taken effective steps to improve learner retention. In one case, managers changed the length of some language in response to learner feedback. New data systems are in place, although they are not always used sufficiently to monitor and take action on classes with high drop-out rates. The observation of teaching and learning scheme is satisfactory. Observation reports are evaluative and contain useful reflections on teacher performance.
51. Tutors are well-supported. Communication within the team is effective. Good practice in the teaching of languages at different ACE centres is shared well in curriculum meetings. New tutors are well-supported. A schedule of observations, feedback and action-planning is used well to develop tutors' teaching skills. Staff are suitably qualified. The service offers a good programme of continuous professional development and teacher training courses. The promotion of equality of opportunity is good. The number of learners from minority ethnic groups participating in foreign and sign language learning classes is high.
52. The self-assessment report and improvement plan for 2007/08 reflects the provision well. Areas for improvement are accurately identified. Tutors are aware of the self-assessment process. Tutors' course reviews are effectively used to support self-assessment judgements.

Preparation for life and work

Satisfactory: Grade 3

Context

53. At the time of inspection, 151 learners were attending 26 classes in English for speakers of other languages (ESOL), 119 were enrolled on 16 literacy classes and 105 learners were attending 13 numeracy classes. All courses are accredited and are taught at entry level, level 1 and level 2. Provision is offered at six sites. All classes are of two and half hours' duration and are taught in the daytime, evening and on Saturday. Most learners are aged 19 or over.

Strengths

-
- Good teaching in literacy and numeracy
 - Good range of courses to meet community and employer needs
 - Particularly good learner support
 - Particularly effective recent actions to raise standards and improve the provision

Areas for improvement

- Low success rates on ESOL courses
- Insufficient correction of learners' spoken language in ESOL
- Insufficient checks on learners' understanding

Achievement and standards

54. Overall, achievement and standards are satisfactory. Learners gain confidence to attend parents' evenings, talk to teachers and function independently in society. One learner, having improved his literacy skills, now writes stories for his children. Retention is high. Success rates in literacy and numeracy courses are satisfactory. The standard of learners' work is satisfactory. Attendance in classes is good.
55. Success rates in ESOL were low at 30% in 2007/08. Learners did not achieve all the components of their qualification. Although 61% of learners passed the speaking and listening exam, they did not attempt the reading and writing exam.

Quality of provision

56. The quality of provision is satisfactory. Teaching and learning are satisfactory. Teaching is good in literacy and numeracy sessions. Communication between tutors and learners is good. Tasks and activities are engaging and interesting. Tutors stimulate interest in learning through good questioning techniques. They provide challenging tasks. In one session, learners were presented with a worksheet on smoking that contained several statements about the effects of smoking. Learners had to work together to decide which of the statements were true and which were false. The activity generated lively debate and discussion about the harmful effects of smoking. In numeracy, learning is related to real life situations. In one session, learners developed skills in calculating area and perimeter and then applied this learning to calculate the amount of carpet needed for a room and to estimate the length of skirting board required.
57. Teaching and learning in ESOL is generally satisfactory. However in some sessions the range of teaching activities was too narrow. In one unimaginative lesson, learners used pictures in a textbook to practice simple phrases such as 'straight on', or 'turn left or right'.
58. Assessment and the monitoring of learners' progress is satisfactory overall. The recording and monitoring of progress is thorough. Initial assessment is used effectively to plan individual learning.
59. Learners' spoken English is not always corrected in ESOL sessions. This weakness was identified at the reinspection. For example, in one session, a learner gave an incorrect response to a question. The tutor failed to identify or correct the error. Learners do not develop accuracy in spoken English. Learners' written work contains many errors.
60. Tutors in some sessions make insufficient checks on learners' understanding. In some sessions, learners' understanding of numeracy is insufficiently reinforced. Learners are not questioned sufficiently to check whether they understand how they reached the answer to a numeracy problem. Tutors provide insufficient detail at the end of sessions to summarise the key learning points.
61. ACE provides a good range of courses to meet the needs and interests of learners and employers. The curriculum is well-designed. Classes are in accessible centres, such as libraries and community centres, and all are on public transport routes. Provision is socially inclusive. Classes are available at times to suit learners. For ESOL learners, provision is also available in the workplace.
62. Advice, guidance and support for learners are good. Many entry level learners benefit from having learning support assistants to support them in class either in a small group or individually. Visually impaired learners receive useful enlarged text handouts. Dyslexia support is good. Learning support tutors work well with tutors.

Leadership and management

63. Leadership and management are good. Managers have taken particularly effective recent actions to raise standards and improve the provision. They have implemented good strategies to support the completion of ESOL qualifications in order to raise overall success rates. The observation of teaching and learning scheme has been strengthened to support improvements in the quality of learning sessions. All staff have attended a 30 hour course in preparing to teach in the lifelong learning sector. Lead tutors provide good support and mentoring for new tutors. Staff are suitably qualified in their subject area. Attendance, retention and achievement are closely monitored. The provision is responsive to the needs of the community. Effective partnership arrangements are in place with Jobcentre Plus, Milton Keynes Chamber of Commerce and a local further education college.
64. Equality and diversity are satisfactory. In a few classes, learners' background and interests are considered and reflected in resources used. The self-assessment process is comprehensive and the report is honest, robust and critical. It reflects most of the strengths and areas for improvement found by inspectors.

Family learning

Satisfactory: Grade 3

Context

65. In 2007/08, 819 learners enrolled on family learning programmes. Of these, 162 were male and 167 were from a minority ethnic group. No learners declared a learning difficulty and/or disability. At the time of inspection, 174 learners were enrolled on family learning courses, 77 on family literacy, language and numeracy (FLLN) programmes, and 97 on wider family learning provision. FLLN courses are mainly designed for parents of children in the Foundation Stage and Key Stage 1. Wider family learning programmes are designed to encourage parents to support their child's learning. Eighteen tutors deliver courses in 17 venues. The widening participation manager has overall responsibility for the family learning curriculum.

Strengths

- Good development of learners' parenting skills
- Good teaching and learning to challenge learners in wider family learning
- Good initiatives to recruit male learners

Areas for improvement

- Insufficient use of ICT
- Ineffective planning of FLLN courses
- Poor initial advice and guidance for FLLN learners

Achievement and standards

66. Achievement and standards are satisfactory. Learners develop good skills in parenting, which help to support their children's learning. These include sharing books with their children and supporting their children's understanding of numbers. Many develop confidence and sound strategies to manage their children's behaviour.
67. Retention in 2007/08 was high at 91%. Learners' achievement of group learning goals is good. However, learners' achievement of personal targets in literacy and numeracy are not sufficiently recorded. Standards of learners' work are satisfactory. Attendance is satisfactory.

Quality of provision

68. The quality of provision is satisfactory. Teaching and learning overall are satisfactory. Tutors challenge learners well in wider family learning. Learners participate in lively sessions and contribute successfully to stimulating discussions. Tutors praise and encourage learners and check their understanding well. They manage sessions effectively. Learners participate in a good variety of interesting learning activities. They support each other and respect each others' views. Teaching and learning on FLLN programmes are satisfactory. Learners participate well in sessions and support their children well in joint learning sessions. In some sessions, the content is insufficiently linked to the topics that children are studying at school.
69. Teachers make insufficient use of ICT. Teachers and learners make very little use of technology to support teaching and learning. Some teachers refer learners to websites for use at home, but this does not sufficiently prepare learners to use ICT effectively with their children or to support their own learning.
70. Provision to meet learners' needs and interests overall is satisfactory. ACE offers a good range of wider family learning programmes. The service promotes a good range of programmes designed to attract underrepresented groups. For example, an outdoor activity programme for fathers and sons has successfully contributed to improving male participation rates. The service checks venues for "male friendliness" well. The family learning team also provide stimulating enrichment activities, such as visits to outdoor activity centres that are targeted at male learners.
71. The planning of FLLN courses is ineffective. FLLN teachers do not sufficiently collaborate with school teachers to plan the content of FLLN courses. Tutors in different schools cover identical subject areas. Learning goals are also identical. Tutors do not work sufficiently closely with schools in preparing joint sessions for children and adults. The range of FLLN programmes is insufficient to meet learners' and community needs. No FLLN programme offers learners the opportunity to work towards a qualification.
72. Support for learners is satisfactory overall. Tutors provide effective personal support for learners in the classroom. Information, advice and guidance are satisfactory. Learners receive satisfactory advice and guidance. Those on wider family learning programmes receive effective information, advice and guidance before they begin their course. Satisfactory systems are in place to identify and support learners with additional support needs.

73. ACE provides poor information, advice and guidance for FLLN learners. Information is insufficiently explicit about the literacy or numeracy content of courses.

Leadership and management

74. Leadership and management overall are satisfactory. Leadership and management of wider family learning programmes are good. Managers support teachers well and communicate effectively with them. All staff receive a comprehensive pack of information, guidance and resources. Staff participate in a wide range of professional development activities. Managers and staff make good use of learner feedback in planning provision. The family learning team works particularly well with the council to establish family learning within each children's centre.

75. Promotion of equality and diversity is good. The service successfully promotes social inclusion through its work with fathers and male carers and with vulnerable parents. It celebrates diversity in some of its marketing and learning materials.

76. Resources are satisfactory. The service provides a good range of teaching and learning materials and equipment. However learners have insufficient access to ICT. Accommodation in most venues is satisfactory, although some does not provide furniture suitable for adults.

77. Observation of teaching and learning is satisfactory. Observers make well-supported judgements about the teaching and learning process and give appropriate grades. Teachers receive adequate feedback following observation. The self-assessment process is critical and inclusive. ACE acknowledged most of the judgements that the inspectors made.

Learners' achievements

Select appropriate grade tables from the LSD data tables format Template

Notional Level	Exp End Year	19+			Diff
		Starts – Transfers	ACL Provider Rate	National Rate	
1 long	06/07	329	48	70	-22
	07/08*	180	66	N/A	
2 long	06/07	293	61	69	-8
	07/08*	208	55	N/A	
Short**	06/07	538	55	80	-25
	07/08*	743	57	N/A	

* ACL provider data not validated (used where complete, validated and produced using proprietary software)

** Courses over 5 weeks long