

Southend Adult Community College

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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:

- Health, public services and care
- Information and communication technology
- Arts, media and publishing
- Languages, literature and culture
- Preparation for life and work

Inspectors sampled the provision in family learning, but did not report on it separately. The provision in the remaining sector subject areas was too small to be included in this inspection.

Description of the provider

1. Southend-on-Sea Borough Council became a unitary authority in 1997. The local authority's children and learning services directorate delivers adult and community learning through Southend Adult Community College (SACC), in Southchurch. It contracts for its main source of funding with the Essex LSC. SACC also offers work-based learning provision, most of it as National Vocational Qualifications (NVQs) in children's care, learning and development and supporting teaching and learning in schools. Courses are offered in 14 sector subject areas, but some have very few enrolments. In 2007/08, there were 10,702 enrolments by 6,207 learners. Classes are taught in 20 venues across the borough. At the time of inspection, 3,245 learners made 3,973 enrolments on SACC's learning programmes. About 55% of SACC's courses lead to a qualification. The value of the provider's budget, including work-based learning, is £2.4 million.
2. The college principal reports to the assistant director for learning achievement and school effectiveness within the council, and also to a governing body made up of elected and co-opted members. The vice-principal has operational responsibility for quality assurance, curriculum planning and equality of opportunity. Two directors manage SACC's employer responsiveness and foundation learning provision. A team of managers is responsible for inclusive learning, personal and community development learning, NVQ provision and learning improvement. The provider's finance, information and advice, quality, marketing and management staff provide support services for curriculum managers. SACC employs about 220 part-time tutors.
3. At the last census, Southend's population was 160,293. About 20% of the population is aged over 65, compared with the national average of 15%. The minority ethnic population is 7.1% compared with a national average of 9.4%. Southend is ranked as the 114th most deprived local authority area out of 354. About one-half of all people of working age work in the public sector and in financial services, 18% in manufacturing and construction and the remainder in service industries.

Summary of grades awarded

Effectiveness of provision	Good: Grade 2
Adult and community learning	Contributory grade: Good: Grade 2
Work-based learning	Contributory grade: Outstanding: Grade 1
Capacity to improve	Outstanding: Grade 1
Achievement and standards	Good: Grade 2
Adult and community learning	Contributory grade: Good: Grade 2
Work-based learning	Contributory grade: Outstanding: Grade 1
Quality of provision	Good: Grade 2
Adult and community learning	Contributory grade: Good: Grade 2
Work-based learning	Contributory grade: Outstanding: Grade 1
Leadership and management	Outstanding: Grade 1
Adult and community learning	Contributory grade: Outstanding: Grade 1
Work-based learning	Contributory grade: Outstanding: Grade 1
Equality of opportunity	Contributory grade: Good: Grade 2

Sector subject areas

Health, public services and care	Outstanding: Grade 1
Information and communication technology	Good: Grade 2
Arts, media and publishing	Good: Grade 2
Languages, literature and culture	Good: Grade 2
Preparation for life and work	Good: Grade 2

Overall judgement

Effectiveness of provision

Good: Grade 2

Adult and community learning
Work-based learning

Contributory grade: Good: Grade 2
Contributory grade: Outstanding: Grade 1

4. The overall effectiveness of the provision is good. Achievement and standards and quality of provision are good. Equality of opportunity and the provider's response to social inclusion are good. Leadership and management overall are outstanding. The overall effectiveness of the provider's work-based learning is outstanding.

Capacity to improve

Outstanding: Grade 1

5. SACC demonstrates outstanding capacity to improve. It has made good progress to improve the provision since the previous inspection. Weaknesses in quality assurance arrangements, the use of data and the quality of teaching, have been resolved and are now strengths of the provision. Leadership and management are now outstanding. Success rates on long courses at Level 1 and 2 have improved over the last two years and are now well above sector national averages. Curriculum management is good overall. Inspection grades have improved.
6. Quality improvement arrangements have been considerably strengthened. Self-assessment is a thorough and critical process. Staff and learners are widely consulted. Good use is made of information about learner recruitment and success rates to arrive at sound judgements. The provider correctly identified most of the key judgements made by inspectors, but overstated a few strengths, particularly in preparation for life and work. Governors scrutinise curriculum self-assessment reports carefully. Quality improvement planning is robust. Senior managers monitor actions well. Inspectors gave the same or a higher grade for most aspects of the provision.

Key strengths

- Good success rates on accredited long courses at Level 1 and 2
- Good achievement of personal goals
- Good teaching and learning
- Highly flexible and responsive provision to meet the needs of learners
- Good guidance and support
- Outstanding leadership and management to meet the learning needs of the community
- Particularly successful partnership working to widen participation and promote community cohesion
- Highly effective management of change to promote continuous improvement
- Very good employer engagement
- Good promotion of equality and diversity

Key areas for improvement

- Low success rates on accredited short courses
- Insufficient sharing of good practice

Main findings

Achievement and standards

Good: Grade 2

Adult and community learning
Work-based learning

Contributory grade: Good: Grade 2
Contributory grade: Outstanding: Grade 1

7. Achievement and standards are good overall. This is acknowledged in the self-assessment report. Achievement and standards in work-based learning are outstanding.
8. Success rates on accredited long courses at Level 1 and 2 are good. At Level 1, success rates improved from 80.2% in 2006/07 when the national rate was 70.5%, to 84% in 2007/08. Success rates on long Level 2 courses also improved, from around the national average of 69% in 2006/07, to 83% in 2007/08. Differences in performance between males and females are statistically insignificant. The proportion of learners from minority ethnic groups is too low for valid judgements to be made about differences in performance. However, the success rate for learners who declare a disability at enrolment is 12% higher than for learners who do not declare a disability. Success rates on accredited short courses improved from 2006/07 to 2007/08, but remain low.
9. Most learners achieve their learning goals. Health, public services and care learners develop excellent professional workplace skills. In arts, media and publishing, learners exhibit their work in art galleries in Southend and throughout SACC's learning centres. Learners in preparation for life and work develop good social and employability skills. Success rates in work-based learning are outstanding. In 2006/07, the success rate for learners following the NVQ early years care programme at Level 2 was 92%, compared with a national average of 74%. Current work-based learners are making very good progress. Most are well ahead of schedule with their studies.

Quality of provision

Good: Grade 2

Adult and community learning
Work-based learning

Contributory grade: Good: Grade 2
Contributory grade: Outstanding: Grade 1

10. The overall quality of provision is good. This is recognised in the self-assessment report. The quality of work-based provision is outstanding.
11. Teaching and learning are good, as acknowledged in the self-assessment report. Inspectors observed much good and outstanding teaching and no inadequate learning sessions. The best teaching occurs when teachers plan carefully to meet learners' different abilities and aptitudes. Good use is made of interactive learning materials in many lessons. The weaker lessons lack variety and challenge. The

teacher determines the pace of learning. Procedures for recognising and recording learners' progress and achievement are good. Resources to support teaching and learning are generally good.

12. Teaching and learning in work-based learning are very good. Work-based learning tutors use a wide range of very effective and innovative strategies to promote learning. Learners participate enthusiastically in learning sessions and demonstrate a sound understanding of key theoretical approaches in childcare. Assessment practice is good. Employers ensure that their learners benefit from relevant and frequent opportunities for assessment in the workplace.
13. SACC's response to social inclusion and the extent to which programmes and activities meet the needs and interests of learners are outstanding. The curriculum is highly flexible and responsive to the needs of learners, employers and to the regional priorities and targets determined by the funding body. Partnerships with employers and community organisations are excellent. Partners regard SACC's work to promote Skills for Life training in the borough highly. The range of courses is good. Strategies to widen participation and promote community cohesion are very effective. The proportion of new learners is high in many curriculum areas.
14. Support and guidance are good. Learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are integrated well into mainstream classes in several curriculum areas. Learning support assistants and volunteer workers are effectively deployed during learning sessions. Initial assessment arrangements are robust. The support for learners with literacy, numeracy or language needs is good. Course information is generally clear and widely available. Progression opportunities are clearly signposted. Guidance and support for work-based learners is good. Tutors provide sensitive personal and academic support. They help learners at risk of leaving the course early, to stay on and achieve the qualification. Staff are easily accessible and committed to learners' welfare and achievement.

Leadership and management

Outstanding: Grade 1

Adult and community learning

Contributory grade: Outstanding: Grade 1

Work-based learning

Contributory grade: Outstanding: Grade 1

Equality of opportunity

Contributory grade: Good: Grade 2

15. Leadership and management are outstanding. SACC's leadership is highly effective in refocusing adult and community learning provision in response to national and regional agendas to meet the learning needs of the community. This is recognised in the self-assessment report. An open and consultative leadership style promotes a shared vision and focus for staff. The provider is a key strategic player in borough-wide initiatives and it leads on many regional and national advisory and working groups. It has been very successful in attracting significant amounts of funding to improve its estate and to extend the range and quality of accessible provision for adult learners in Southend. Sound strategic planning and curriculum development is highly responsive to the needs of individuals and partner organisations. SACC targets its resources carefully to maximise learner access and inclusion. It leads a strong local partnership to support learners with profound and multiple learning difficulties.

16. Partnership working is particularly successful in widening participation and strengthening community cohesion, as recognised in the self-assessment report. This is highly valued by partners. The principal is a member of a government advisory group for community cohesion. Partnerships with the local authority, public sector and voluntary sector organisations contribute significantly to the priorities of the local strategic area plan and children and young people's plan. Successful partnerships have helped to promote participation in learning for teenage mothers, parents and toddlers, and young adults not in education, training or employment. SACC is a key provider of training and employment opportunities to tackle inter-generational unemployment in Southend. SACC successfully provides a good range of programmes to engage learners who have complex needs and barriers to learning, such as those with mental health difficulties, severe and profound learning needs and those who are homeless. Partnerships are productive in identifying and recruiting new learners. A high proportion of enrolments in 2007/08 were new learners.

17. SACC is highly effective in managing change to promote continuous improvement. This strength is also recognised in the self-assessment report. The provider is well prepared to respond effectively to a volatile external environment and has an excellent record in managing change. It is innovative and not afraid to take difficult decisions. SACC has reviewed and strengthened a wide range of management and quality systems to focus more closely on quality improvement. The comprehensive quality framework, new at the time of the previous inspection, is now contributing to raising standards of learner performance and success. Weaknesses in quality, data and target-setting at the previous inspection are now resolved. Monitoring, review and reporting structures at all levels are

more thorough. Staff are encouraged to try out new ideas. They appreciate the opportunity to contribute to improvements, particularly through the principal's focus group and the 'Triad' reflective practitioner groups. Good use is made of external consultancy and peer review to support improvement. The board of governors provides a thorough scrutiny of SACC's performance as a learning provider. Staff and learner governors contribute fully to all aspects of SACC's governance.

18. SACC's links with employers are very good. It works productively with Southend Borough Council, South Essex Primary Care Trust and the NHS Trust. Employers value the quality of the partnerships. This is not sufficiently recognised in the self-assessment report. Employers particularly appreciate the expertise of SACC's staff in promoting continuing professional development activities for their staff. The provider is highly responsive and flexible in responding to employer needs and in designing bespoke learning packages, which include Skills for Life training. Its well-established and recognised partnerships with Southend Borough Council have supported workforce development in several council departments. Good relationships with a Train to Gain consortium have helped to rationalise the curriculum offer to avoid duplication of provision within the borough. Learners completing an NVQ at Level 3 can now progress on to a Foundation Degree developed in partnership with the University of Essex.
19. Equality of opportunity and the promotion of diversity are good, as identified through the self-assessment report. SACC has well-established arrangements to comply with race, gender, disability and age legislation and promotes equality of opportunity for individual learners in all aspects of its strategy, policy and practice. SACC's equality policy covers all aspects of the learner journey and identifies clear staff responsibilities for promoting equalities. A helpful teaching and learning checklist outlines guidance, support and actions that staff can take to promote inclusion. Staff implementation of equality of opportunity in teaching and learning is monitored through the provider's observation of teaching scheme. Staff attendance at training events to promote understanding of equalities is very good. A number of minority groups use the provider as a community base. SACC hosts family events to promote the celebration of diverse cultures and traditions. The equality and diversity working group has wide representation, but was only recently established. It has yet to implement the single equality scheme action plan.
20. The procedures for safeguarding learners meet government requirements. Staff and learners understand the policy and procedures for safeguarding. A designated member of staff is responsible for protection issues. Criminal Records Bureau checks are carried out on all new staff, managers and those likely to come into contact with children and vulnerable adults.
21. The sharing of good practice is insufficient. This is not recognised in the self-assessment report. Tutors have insufficient opportunity to share good practice with staff in different curriculum areas. SACC has recently begun to promote the

use of its virtual learning environment facility to help staff identify and share good curriculum practice, but does not yet use this resource widely.

What learners like:

- The very patient tutors
- The friendly college atmosphere – everyone is very approachable
- The variety of courses available
- The progression opportunities
- The local venue
- 'Being able to pay for my course in instalments'
- 'We work at our own pace'
- 'I'm now more confident at doing exams'
- There is good respect for people of all ages
- 'I've got my Level 1 certificate in literacy. I never thought I could do that'
- 'Good canteen'

What learners think could improve:

- The number of spaces in the car park – 'there's not enough'
- The number of late course cancellations when there are insufficient enrolments
- The degree of certainty that there would be no reduction in leisure courses
- The cost of courses – 'they're too expensive'
- The layout of the Southchurch centre – 'there's only one entrance and one exit in the whole building'

Sector subject areas

Health, public services and care

Outstanding: Grade 1

Context

22. SACC offers work-based NVQ training at Level 2 and 3 in children's care, learning and development for 143 learners. Of these, 96 are following the Level 3 qualification. Most learners are employed as childminders in day nurseries and after-school clubs. Some work with children who have additional needs or who have been excluded from other provision. Assessors visit learners in the workplace to carry out assessment and to review progress. Seven learners are from a minority ethnic background and two are male.

Strengths

- Outstanding success rates
- Excellent development of professional childcare skills
- Very good teaching and learning
- Outstanding partnerships
- Good support for learners
- Outstanding leadership and management

Areas for improvement

- No significant areas for improvement

Achievement and standards

23. Achievement and standards are outstanding. Success rates are outstanding. In 2006/07, the success rate for learners on the NVQ at Level 2 was 92%, which is significantly above the national average of 74%. SACC recently introduced the Level 3 programme for any learners to have completed their qualification; these learners are making very good progress. Most are well ahead of their planned target date to complete the NVQ units.

24. Learners develop excellent professional workplace skills. Practical skills are of a high standard. Learners demonstrate these skills during off-the-job training and in the workplace. SACC staff and employers work together to ensure that learners have opportunities to develop their professional skills. Learners on Level 2 courses demonstrate their understanding of a wide range of methods for observing and analysing children's behaviour. This helps to promote their knowledge and understanding of child development. Learners are well prepared for their work with children. Staff in the workplace are very supportive and encourage learners to attend lessons and to complete their qualification.

25. The standard of learners' written work is good. Learners demonstrate good understanding of childcare development and theoretical perspectives. Their work contains appropriate references to their experience with children. Written work is well presented and learners take pride in their work.

Quality of provision

26. The quality of provision is outstanding. Teaching and learning are very good. Learners enjoy lessons. Tutors use a wide range of very effective strategies to promote learning. Many tutors are innovative in their choice of learning activities. Learners develop a good understanding of theoretical frameworks. In one lesson, learners benefited from an introductory practical creative activity which greatly increased their understanding of childcare theory. Learners are prepared for safe working in their placements. They complete a range of induction activities which cover aspects of health and safety relevant to nursery practice. Detailed schemes of work and lesson plans are in place. Tutors regularly evaluate their sessions, but some do not systematically record these evaluations. Resources for early years learners are good. Learners have access to a wide range of materials for creative activities. The use of information and learning technology to promote learning is good.

27. Assessment practice is good. Employers ensure that their learners benefit from relevant and frequent opportunities for assessment in the workplace. Learner reviews take place regularly. Employers participate in the process. However, written feedback to employers is insufficiently systematic. SACC identifies this area for improvement in its self-assessment report and actions are in place to resolve this issue. All learners receive a thorough initial assessment and, where appropriate, additional learning support is offered.

28. Arrangements for language, literacy and numeracy support are good. Skills for Life is integrated with the learners' programmes. SACC identifies learners' numeracy and literacy needs early in the programme and gives individual coaching to those that require it. Staff teach literacy and numeracy in a positive and enthusiastic learning environment and integrate them effectively with vocational learning. Skills for Life activities are motivating and enable learners to make appropriate links with their work role.

29. The extent to which the provision meets learners' needs and interests is outstanding. SACC's partnerships with employers and external organisations are excellent. Managers maintain good communication with a wide range of employers in the childcare sector. Employers place a high value on SACC's childcare provision. For many employers, SACC is the provider of choice. The provider's close working partnership with the National Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children has enabled it to develop safeguarding training for staff and governors. Partnership working has contributed to the development of early years courses at Level 4 and to a foundation degree in childcare.

30. Guidance and support are good. Learners receive very effective support in academic and personal matters. Staff support has helped learners at risk of leaving the course early to stay on and achieve the qualification. Staff are easily accessible and committed to learners' welfare and achievement. Learners find staff to be very helpful and approachable. Learners receive good quality, impartial information, advice and guidance about further study and career options.

Leadership and management

31. Leadership and management are outstanding. Managers provide clear direction for all staff. They agree key targets with tutors and have robust support arrangements in place to help staff achieve them. The curriculum is regularly reviewed and amended to take account of recent legislation and developments in childcare practice. The early years childcare tutors are well qualified, experienced and highly motivated. Team work is excellent. Staff support each other well and share good practice in teaching and learning. Managers and tutors focus very clearly on quality improvements. Arrangements for the observation of teaching, learning and assessment are well established. Improvement actions are identified and monitored. Internal moderation and verification procedures are sound. External verifier reports comment very favourably on the NVQ provision.

32. Learners' understanding of equality and diversity is good. Equality issues are thoroughly covered during induction and reinforced during the programme. Learners apply sound equality and diversity principles when they devise practical activities for the children in their care. The Every Child Matters agenda is fully integrated with the early years curriculum. Attention to health and safety is good.

33. The self-assessment report is thorough and inclusive. Curriculum staff contribute to the report, which takes account of the views of learners and employers. The use of data to support judgements through self-assessment is good. SACC identified most of the strengths found by inspectors. However, the most recent report is too critical and inspectors gave a higher grade for the provision than that in the self-assessment report.

Information and communication technology

Good: Grade 2

Context

34. At the time of inspection, 338 learners were attending 24 information and communication technology (ICT) courses. Apart from one accredited Skills for Life ICT course, all of the courses are non-accredited. Learners can attend classes in introductory computing, Photoshop, web page design, desktop publishing, spreadsheets and PowerPoint. Courses are taught during the day and evening at centres in Southend and Leigh-on-Sea. All learners are over the age of 19 and 62% are female. Ten per cent of learners declared a disability when they enrolled on programme.

Strengths

- Good success rates on accredited long courses at Levels 1 and 2
- Good teaching and learning
- Good curriculum management

Areas for improvement

- Poor success rates on short accredited courses

Achievement and standards

35. Achievement and standards are good. Success rates on accredited long courses at Levels 1 and 2 are good. This is recognised in the self-assessment report. At Level 1, success rates improved from 65% in 2006/07 when the national average was 59%, to 77% in 2007/08. Success rates also improved at Level 2 from 61.5% in 2006/07, compared with a national average of 55.8%, to 100% in 2007/08.
36. Learners are enthusiastic about their learning and are encouraged to work and achieve at their own pace. Most make good progress. Learners demonstrate good levels of attainment. They develop good levels of skill and confidence in ICT. Most learners achieve their learning outcomes successfully. Attendance is satisfactory.
37. Success rates on short accredited courses are poor. This is acknowledged in the self-assessment report. Though success rates on these courses improved from a very low base of 56.7% in 2006/07, when the sector average was 79.4%, to 72% in 2007/08, they still remain unsatisfactory. No short accredited courses were running at the time of inspection.

Quality of provision

38. The quality of provision is good, as are teaching and learning. In the best learning sessions, tutors plan carefully to meet individual learner needs and set clear aims and objectives. Tutors provide challenging targets for learners and use a variety of teaching strategies and learning resources to engage their interest. Tutors use independent learning technology (ILT) effectively to promote learning. They give clear explanations and demonstrations to clarify difficult concepts and tasks. Learning is regularly checked. Tutors provide individual coaching for those learners who are struggling with the work. Learners are encouraged to take notes to help reinforce understanding. Tutors set regular homework which they mark promptly. They provide helpful and constructive feedback to enable learners to progress or catch up. In the less effective lessons, tutors failed to differentiate learning tasks effectively. They rely too heavily on demonstrations to the whole class. Some learners are not challenged sufficiently and others find the work too difficult. A few tutors do not evaluate learning sessions sufficiently thoroughly.
39. Teaching resources are good. Rooms are suitable and well equipped with hardware and up-to-date software. Most rooms have data projectors and/or interactive boards. Adaptive technology is available for learners with additional learning needs and used where appropriate. Staff are well qualified and highly motivated.
40. The use of initial assessment to identify learners' literacy, numeracy and language support needs is effective. Staff provide appropriate support for those learners who need it. However, learners on non-accredited courses do not have an initial assessment unless they specifically request one. Many tutors carry out an informal initial assessment and most learners are on a course that meets their needs and abilities. Learners on non-accredited courses have an individual learning plan, but the learning aims are often too general. In a few instances, targets are not specific enough or measurable. Reviews take place regularly but comments on learners' review forms are sometimes unclear.
41. Programmes meet the needs of learners effectively. Learners receive a thorough induction which covers health and safety, complaints, equality and diversity and SACC's expectations of learners. Courses are advertised widely through brochures and prospectuses in libraries, supermarkets, community centres and other local venues. SACC runs well attended taster courses to help learners choose the course that best meets their needs and interests. The range of progression opportunities for learners is good.
42. Guidance and support are good. Managers work effectively with SACC's learning support department to provide volunteer support workers for learners. Collaboration between the ICT and learning support department has helped to set up a successful ICT course for learners with visual impairment. Information, advice and guidance arrangements are good.

Leadership and management

43. Leadership and management are good. This is recognised in the self-assessment report. Curriculum management is good. The quality of provision has improved since the previous inspection and teaching and learning are now good. Quality improvement arrangements are robust. A thorough scheme for the observation of teaching and learning is in place. The observation of tutors takes place once a year and detailed action plans help them improve their performance. Helpful mentoring and support arrangements are in place for new tutors and for tutors identified as having development needs. SACC uses peer observations successfully as a means of sharing good practice. Tutors receive training and development to help them perform better as teachers. They complete course reviews and encourage learners to contribute to course evaluation. Reviews and evaluations are then used to plan the curriculum. Internal verification arrangements for the accredited courses are thorough.
44. Internal communications are effective in keeping staff and learners informed about developments in the ICT curriculum. Staff attend regular meetings. Managers provide good support for existing and new staff. Tutors and managers are set challenging targets during appraisals.
45. SACC's procedures to recognise and record progress and achievement in non-accredited learning are well established. All staff have received training to help them to record learners' progress and achievement. Staff improve the supporting paperwork continuously and audit it regularly.
46. Equality of opportunity is satisfactory. Managers use data well to monitor the performance of different groups of learners. Staff cover equality and diversity effectively during induction. Staff and learners treat each other with respect. Learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities integrate well with other learners and receive good support.
47. Self-assessment is a thorough and inclusive process and incorporates the views of learners and staff. Self-assessment identified most of the key judgements made by inspectors. The use of data to make judgements about performance is particularly good. The inspection grade matches that in the self-assessment report.

Arts, media and publishing

Good: Grade 2

Context

48. SACC offers 268 courses in arts, media and publishing, most of which are non-accredited. Learners study drawing, ceramics, art and design, crafts and the performing arts. Painting courses cover such specialist applications as egg tempera and oil painting. Seven courses in this curriculum area are offered as part of the provider's family learning provision. Courses are taught during the day and evening. Occasional weekend introductory courses are also offered. Most courses take place at venues in Southend and Leigh-on-Sea and are taught over 14 weeks. Of the 861 learners enrolled on programmes during the week of the inspection, 19% were men and 32% were from a minority ethnic background.

Strengths

- Good standards of work
- Good teaching and learning
- Imaginative celebration of learners' success
- Responsive curriculum development
- Good support for learners
- Good curriculum leadership and management

Areas for improvement

- Insufficient use of ILT in learning sessions
- Insufficient subject specific sharing of good practice

Achievement and standards

49. Achievement and standards are good. This is recognised in the self-assessment report. Standards of work are good. Learners progress well in their lessons and demonstrate a high standard of practical skills. They are proud of the work that they produce. In a tailoring class, learners produced garments to a professional standard. New learners in a raku pottery lesson gained inspiration through examining good quality examples from a previous class. In a first steps craft course, one learner, having progressed from a discrete course for learners with disabilities, proudly displayed a sketchbook which revealed a good level of research and writing skills. Public displays of art, craft and photographs in classrooms and around the main site showcase good quality work.

50. Success rates on accredited courses are satisfactory. Retention rates on non-accredited courses are high. However, the learning outcomes on the non-accredited courses are not thorough enough to support meaningful judgements about achievement rates.

Quality of provision

51. The quality of provision is good. Teaching and learning are good, as acknowledged in the self-assessment report. Tutors plan lessons and courses well. They use good supporting materials and visual learning aids. In the most successful lessons, learners are challenged and encouraged to develop individual lines of artistic enquiry. Supportive individual coaching and the good use of homework to extend learning are particularly strong in visual arts and crafts lessons. In many lessons, learners support each others' learning effectively. Many learners are able to articulate what they have learnt and are not afraid to ask questions to clarify their understanding. Most tutors are practitioners in a specialist artistic discipline, and often draw on their professional experience to illustrate particular techniques and skills. The less successful lessons are characterised by a lack of variety in teaching and learning methods and insufficiently rigorous use of question and answer techniques.
52. Resources to support teaching and learning are good. Rooms are clean, tidy and well equipped. Learners' work is displayed in teaching rooms. Tutors have access to a good range of arts materials. Specialist equipment is of good quality.
53. Tutors make insufficient use of ILT in learning sessions. This is acknowledged in the self-assessment. Computers and interactive whiteboards have been installed in many classrooms and studios, but tutors fail to exploit their full potential. In some classes, tutors do not encourage learners sufficiently to use web-based sources to research creative projects. Some tutors do not have sufficient technical expertise to make effective use of ILT.
54. The extent to which programmes meet learners' needs is outstanding. SACC celebrates learners' success imaginatively. This is recognised in the self-assessment report. Learners' work is regularly displayed at art galleries in Southend and at SACC's centre in Leigh-on-Sea. Learners from music classes join learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities studying music to perform concerts at a local school. SACC's managers and their friends sponsor individual prizes for achievement. In a crochet class, learners are making a blanket which they will raffle for a disabled dance group to help pay their travel costs to an international dance competition in Holland.
55. SACC's curriculum development is responsive and has contributed successfully to the provider's widening participation targets. Recent cuts in funding for accredited provision in arts, media and publishing have been responsibly managed. The curriculum area has been restructured to meet local needs for non-accredited arts provision. The range of courses in the curriculum area is good. Many new courses are now offered. The number of new learners increased significantly in 2007/08 to around 65% of all enrolments. However, the proportion of learners from minority ethnic backgrounds is low at 3%.
56. Guidance and support are good. This is recognised in the self-assessment. Support for learners is good. Tutors know their learners well and provide good

quality support in learning sessions. Additional support is readily available for those learners who identify a need. Learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities integrate successfully with mainstream classes. Information, advice and guidance are good. The prospectus is now more learner friendly, and individual course sheets are informative. They provide full details of the range of available support. All course information is now available online.

Leadership and management

57. Leadership and management are good, as acknowledged in SACC's self-assessment report. The curriculum manager has a clear vision for arts, media and publishing and has successfully developed a curriculum that meets local and national priorities. Initiatives to widen participation have proved particularly successful and many new partnerships have been established. All tutors comply with SACC's procedure for recognising and recording progress and achievement. Managers are piloting new, more learner-friendly paperwork to help monitor learners' progress and achievement. These initiatives have improved learners' understanding of individual learning plans.
58. Equality of opportunity is satisfactory. An effective programme of community outreach provision for disadvantaged learners has supported SACC's widening participation strategy. The use of a life model with a physical disability in a drawing class represents a successful celebration of diversity. Staff and learners receive appropriate information and guidance about equality and diversity during their induction. Learners are treated fairly. The initial assessment of literacy, numeracy and language support is satisfactory.
59. Quality improvement is satisfactory. The observation of teaching and learning scheme has been successful in raising the overall quality of learning sessions, though a few lessons are over graded. Course files are regularly audited. Self-assessment is a thorough and inclusive process, incorporating tutors' end of course reports to reach judgements about the quality of provision. Most of the strengths and areas for improvements found by inspectors are acknowledged in the self-assessment report. The inspection grade matches that in the self-assessment.
60. The sharing of subject specific good practice is insufficient, an area for improvement not identified through self-assessment. SACC does not encourage the best tutors to share good practice routinely. Though tutors are encouraged to improve their teaching practice by observing good tutors, this has been only partially successful in raising the standards of teaching and learning. SACC has established a virtual learning environment tool to support the dissemination of good practice, but this resource is not used effectively to promote improvements in teaching and learning.

Languages, literature and culture

Good: Grade 2

Context

61. SACC provides foreign language courses in Arabic, Chinese, French, German, Greek, Italian, Russian and Spanish. Learners can also study Makaton and English at GCSE and A level. At the time of inspection, courses in Arabic, Chinese and Russian were not running. About one third of the courses are accredited. All courses are available at beginners level. Courses in French, Italian and Spanish are also offered at intermediate level and advanced level. German is offered only at beginners' and intermediate level. Evening courses account for 43% of the provision. Most learning sessions last for two hours. Courses vary in length from 10 weeks to 30 weeks.

62. At the time of the inspection, 461 learners had made 592 enrolments on 35 courses. Eighty-three per cent of learners were over the age of 19 and 70% were women. Three per cent declared a disability. A part-time curriculum manager manages 23 part-time tutors. Ninety per cent of tutors hold a relevant teaching qualification and 75% are native speakers of the language they teach.

Strengths

- Good success rates on accredited long courses at Levels 1 and 2
- Good development of listening skills
- Good use of the foreign language by teachers during learning sessions
- Good actions to improve the quality of provision

Areas for improvement

- Insufficient recording of learners' previous language skills to monitor progress

Achievement and standards

63. Achievement and standards are good, as recognised in the self-assessment report. Success rates on accredited long courses at Levels 1 and 2 are good. At Level 1, success rates improved from 84% in 2006/07 when the national average was 68%, to 96% in 2007/08. On level 2 accredited courses, success rates improved from around the national average of 73% in 2006/07 to 89% in 2007/08. Current learners on accredited courses are making good progress.

64. Learners' development of listening skills is good. This is not recognised in the self-assessment report. Learners follow and respond well to the tutors' instructions and explanations in the foreign language. In beginners' classes, learners become confident in listening for key words to gain an understanding of what is being said. In higher level language classes, learners understand information delivered at near-native speed and can pick out specific details from recorded

conversations. Reading, writing and speaking skills are satisfactory overall. Attendance during inspection was satisfactory.

Quality of provision

65. The quality of provision is good. Teaching and learning are good. Tutors make good use of the foreign language during learning sessions to provide explanations and to reinforce points of grammar. Some use choral repetition for practising pronunciation and intonation. Most tutors are adept at using synonyms or rephrasing to clarify unfamiliar language. In better lessons, they display learning outcomes on the whiteboard to ensure learners know what they should be able to do by the end of the lesson. Classes are lively and varied with a range of resources and activities to enhance learning. Tutors use ILT effectively in many lessons to provide variety, pace and visual stimuli. Many lessons contain culturally-specific material to help learners understand different customs and traditions. Learners work productively and enjoy their lessons. However, in a few classes, there is insufficient use of extension activities to provide extra challenge for the more advanced learners.
66. The recording of learners' previous language skills to monitor progress is insufficient. This is not identified through self-assessment. Learners are invited to assess their previous level of skill and knowledge in the language before they begin their studies. Tutors also carry out an informal initial assessment of learners' language skills and produce a useful summary record of this activity. However, tutors do not record the level of competence achieved in each of the key language skills. Learners who continue from one language course to another do not always carry out a new initial assessment. A few tutors keep their own independent records of learners' ability in each key language skill to help them monitor progress and achievement against each learner's starting point. However, not all learners benefit from this good practice.
67. The extent to which the provision meets learners' needs is satisfactory. The provider offers an appropriate range of foreign languages. In 2008/09, progression routes were planned for French, Italian and Spanish, but insufficient enrolments have prevented SACC from offering courses at all of the levels advertised. Courses in some of the less commonly spoken foreign languages are available periodically, but often fail to recruit sufficient numbers of learners to be viable.
68. Guidance and support arrangements are effective. Student advisers provide detailed advice and guidance for learners intending to enrol on GCSE and A level courses. Learners on these courses receive eight hours of tutorial support during the year. Learners identified as being at risk of failing to complete their qualification receive extra individual support from their tutor to help them achieve. Information, advice and guidance are good. Course information sheets contain a detailed description of each course and what learners can expect to achieve. Progression routes are clearly signposted. Information in the main prospectus provides clear guidelines to help learners select the most appropriate

course. Tutors give freely of their own time to help learners succeed. Absence monitoring is good. Tutors are informed of any learners who declare a disability on enrolment in order that appropriate support can be provided.

Leadership and management

69. Leadership and management are very good. Actions to improve the quality of the provision are good. SACC manages the provision well. The curriculum manager consults widely with staff to bring about improvements. A focus group of tutors works together to produce standardised assessment tasks for accredited and non-accredited courses. New individual learning plans were drawn up in consultation with tutors. Meetings are held each term and good practice shared. Mentors are appointed to support new tutors. Mentoring arrangements are also implemented for tutors whose performance following an internal lesson observation is judged to be below the provider's expectations. Tutors are appraised annually. Challenging targets for success, retention and achievement are communicated to all staff.
70. SACC's procedures for recognising and recording learners' progress and achievement on non-accredited courses is effective. Learning outcomes are based on the Common European Framework for Languages. Tutors apply the procedures conscientiously and complete the supporting paperwork.
71. Equality of opportunity arrangements are satisfactory. Tutors' understand equality and diversity issues. Cultural and linguistic diversity is regularly celebrated in learning sessions. Learners treat each other with respect and courtesy.
72. The self-assessment process is thorough and inclusive. The provider gathers tutor and learner feedback and uses it to improve provision and to support self-assessment activity. As a result of critical learner feedback, courses are no longer taught in school premises. The self-assessment report is broadly accurate and correctly identifies most of the strengths found by inspectors. However, the report does not acknowledge the area for improvement. Inspectors gave the same grade as that in the self-assessment.

Preparation for life and work

Good: Grade 2

Context

73. SACC offers accredited and non-accredited courses in literacy, numeracy and English for speakers of other languages (ESOL) from entry level to Level 2. A discrete programme for learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is also offered. Provision for learners with moderate, severe and complex learning difficulties takes place at a separately managed specialist centre. The curriculum area also offers provision for learners aged 16 to 19 who are not in education, employment or training.

74. Courses are taught at SACC's main sites in Southend and Leigh-on-Sea and at community venues throughout the borough. Most courses are taught for two to six hours a week over periods of 15, 30 or 36 weeks. Learners can attend courses during the day or evening and at weekends, including Sundays. The literacy, language and numeracy programme is taught at four main centres and 17 community venues. Three full-time, five part-time and 30 hourly paid tutors are responsible for teaching and learning. This team receives support from four learning support assistants and 56 volunteer workers. Two full-time tutors and 10 support assistants work at the specialist centre. About two thirds of the provision leads to a national skills for life qualification. Of the 1,187 learners enrolled at the time of inspection, 68% were men, 11% were aged 16 to 19 and 12% declared a disability.

Strengths

- Good success rates on accredited long courses at Levels 1 and 2
- Good development of social and employability skills
- Highly effective and innovative teaching
- Particularly effective strategies to meet learners' diverse needs
- Good curriculum management

Areas for improvement

- Poor attendance
- Insufficient challenge for more able learners in a minority of learning sessions

Achievement and standards

75. Achievement and standards are good overall. This strength is recognised in the self-assessment report. Success rates on accredited long courses at Levels 1 and 2 are good. In 2006/07, the overall success rate on accredited Level 1 long provision was 82%, compared with a national average of 72%. In 2007/08, it had improved slightly to 83%. In 2006/07, the overall success rate on accredited level 2 long courses was 55%, compared with a national rate of 68%. In 2007/08, this

had improved to 77%. The success rate on accredited short courses is satisfactory, having improved from just below the national average of 78% in 2006/07, to 82% in 2007/08.

76. Learners develop good social and employability skills. They gain useful skills, which improve their employability, such as time-management, curriculum vitae writing and interview technique. They gain increased confidence and ability. Most learners improve their ability to work cooperatively with their peers. Learners' achievements are celebrated through attractive displays of their work in classrooms and public areas. A well-attended concert to celebrate the achievements of learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities takes place every year. Some learners have achieved external awards.
77. Attendance is poor. This is not recognised in the self-assessment. The average attendance during the first six weeks of the 2008/09 term was just 76%. The average attendance in the lessons observed by inspectors was only 68%. Attendance is worse in some classes than others. Managers have only recently identified this as a cause for concern and have begun to consider strategies to improve attendance.

Quality of provision

78. The quality of provision is good. Teaching and learning are good, as acknowledged in the self-assessment. Teaching is highly effective and innovative. Most sessions are well organised and carefully planned. Tutors are highly committed. They use a wide variety of teaching strategies. In the best sessions, learners' individual needs are carefully discussed with support staff or volunteer workers and recorded in the lesson plan. Many lessons are exciting, motivating and serve to foster active learning. Tutors use a wide range of learning materials and educational resources to expand learners' horizons and to meet their specific needs. Examples include modern works of fiction and resources that reflect specific interests such as car maintenance, cooking and model making. Learners' work is linked to vocational and social needs where appropriate. Lessons include references to local and national news events. Equality and diversity issues are effectively integrated with many of the learning activities. In the best lessons, learners and tutors use ILT to good effect.
79. More able learners are insufficiently challenged in a minority of learning sessions. The range of learners' abilities is too wide in some classes. Some learners have very complex and challenging support needs and take up a large amount of tutor time. In these sessions, more able learners do not receive sufficient tutor attention. In learning sessions without learning support staff or volunteer workers, the tutor often struggles to meet the needs of all learners. More experienced tutors are able to mitigate the problem by means of detailed planning and preparation, but even then, some learners at the higher ability range do not always receive sufficient challenge.

80. SACC's procedures for recognising and recording learners' progress and achievement are satisfactory. Most tutors set clear and detailed learning targets, and progress reviews are meaningful and useful to learners. In a minority of cases however, targets are set collectively for a whole class, which generally fail to reflect individual learning goals.
81. Strategies to meet learners' diverse needs are particularly effective. The range of courses has recently been widened to reflect local demand and to meet priorities and targets set by the funding body. A full range of courses in literacy, language and numeracy is offered during the day and evening. Provision for learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is extensive. A specialist centre makes good provision for learners with severe and complex learning needs. Programmes include provision for learners on probation and disadvantaged young people. SACC has participated in pilot activities related to the proposed Foundation Learning Tier and has contributed to a national publication of a toolkit for tutors working with learners not in education, employment or training.
82. Support for learners is satisfactory. Tutorial support arrangements are satisfactory. Learners receive appropriate pastoral and learning support. They feel well protected and safe. The language, literacy and numeracy needs of all learners are accurately assessed and appropriate support given where required. Information, advice and guidance for learners are thorough and detailed.

Leadership and management

83. Leadership and management are good, as recognised in the self-assessment report. Curriculum management is good. Managers focus clearly on quality improvements. Managers integrate staff training closely with appraisal and development needs identified during the observation of teaching and learning process. Tutors receive good support for continuous professional development activities. Staff are set challenging performance targets which managers monitor regularly. Team work is effective and good practices openly shared.
84. Equality of opportunity arrangements are satisfactory. There is regular reinforcement of equality and diversity during learning sessions. Managers and tutors foster a strong culture of mutual respect. Learners work cooperatively with each other. Staff have a particularly good understanding of the needs of learners with a wide range of abilities and personal circumstances. Facilities for people with disabilities are good.
85. The self-assessment process is inclusive and incorporates the views of learners and tutors effectively to reach judgements. The use of data to support judgements is good. The self-assessment process identifies most of the strengths of the provision, but not the area for improvement in lack of challenge for more able learners in mixed ability classes. Inspectors gave a lower grade for the provision than that in the self-assessment report.

Learners' achievements

Learners' achievements in FE funded, accredited provision offered by ACL providers

Success rates on accredited entry and Level 1 (combined) and Level 2 qualifications, by length, expected end year and age.

2006 to 2008, compared with the national rates for GFE colleges.

Notional Level	Exp End Year	19+			Diff
		Starts – Transfers	ACL Provider Rate	National Rate	
1 long	06/07	870	80.2	70.5	9.7
	07/08*	916	84	N/A	
2 long	06/07	599	68.8	69	-0.2
	07/08*	432	83	N/A	
Short**	06/07	749	74.4	82.9	-8.5
	07/08*	1072	80	N/A	

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

** Courses over 5 weeks long