

Birmingham City Council

Reinspection report

Reinspection date

9 October 2008

Reinspection number

329834

Contents

Background information	3
Reinspection judgements	3
Scope of the reinspection.....	3
Description of the provider.....	3
Summary of grades awarded at previous inspection	5
Summary of grades awarded at reinspection	5
Key strengths	6
Key areas for improvement.....	7
Main findings	7
Achievement and standards	7
Quality of provision.....	8
Leadership and management	9
What learners like	12
What learners think could improve.....	12

Background information

Reinspection 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 reinspection 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 reinspection

In deciding the scope of the reinspection, inspectors consider the previous inspection report (www.ofsted.gov.uk), reports from the inspectorate's reinspection monitoring visits, and data and learners and their achievements over the period since the previous inspection. Inspectors also 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.

This reinspection reports on specialist provision in:

- Independent living and leisure skills

Description of the provider

1. Birmingham City Council provides government-funded provision for adult and community learners through its Birmingham Adult Education Service (BAES). The head of BAES reports to the service director for younger adults who in turn reports to the strategic director for adults and communities. The cabinet member for adults and communities holds political accountability for the work of the directorate.
2. Learning programmes are available through a network of learning centres, libraries and community centres. Facilities include nine main centres and more than 100 smaller venues offering programmes of vocational and non-vocational study. In addition, a learndirect centre is provided through the Birmingham City central library. Management of the service is undertaken by four management teams each with responsibility for the Brasshouse language centre, and the adult learning services for the south, north and east of the city. The service holds contracts with Birmingham and Solihull LSC for the provision of accredited and non-accredited adult and community learning programmes.
3. Following inspection in May 2007, arrangements for leadership and management, equality of opportunity and the effectiveness of the provision were judged to be good. In addition, 10 sector skills areas were judged as satisfactory or good. However, the quality of independent living and leisure skills was judged to be inadequate. At reinspection, the sector subject area had 250 learners, mostly following accredited programmes. All classes are part-time, offered during the day and run for 30 to 32 weeks. Programmes are predominantly available in the areas of arts and crafts, literacy and numeracy, independent living skills and information and communication technology (ICT).

Summary of grades awarded at previous inspection

Effectiveness of provision	Good: Grade 2
Adult and community learning	Contributory grade: Good: Grade 2
ESF	Contributory grade: Good: Grade 2
learndirect	Contributory grade: Good: Grade 2
Capacity to improve	Good: Grade 2
Achievement and standards	Satisfactory: Grade 3
Adult and community learning	Contributory grade: Satisfactory: Grade 3
ESF	Contributory grade: Good: Grade 2
learndirect	Contributory grade: Satisfactory: Grade 3
Quality of provision	Good: Grade 2
Adult and community learning	Contributory grade: Good: Grade 2
ESF	Contributory grade: Good: Grade 2
learndirect	Contributory grade: Good: Grade 2
Leadership and management	Good: Grade 2
Adult and community learning	Contributory grade: Good: Grade 2
ESF	Contributory grade: Satisfactory: Grade 3
learndirect	Contributory grade: Good: Grade 2
Equality of opportunity	Contributory grade: Good: Grade 2

Sector subject areas

Health and social care	Good: Grade 2
ICT	Good: Grade 2
Crafts, creative arts and design	Satisfactory: Grade 3
Languages, literature and culture	Good: Grade 2
Education and training	Satisfactory: Grade 3
Literacy and numeracy	Satisfactory: Grade 3
ESOL	Good: Grade 2
Independent living and leisure skills	Inadequate: Grade 4
Employability training	Good: Grade 2
Business, administration and law	Satisfactory: Grade 3
Family learning	Good: Grade 2

Summary of grades awarded at reinspection

Achievement and standards	Good: Grade 2
Quality of provision	Satisfactory: Grade 3
Leadership and management	Good: Grade 2
Equality of opportunity	Contributory grade: Satisfactory: Grade 3

Sector subject areas

Independent living and leisure skills	Satisfactory: Grade 3
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Key strengths

- Good success rates on accredited programmes
- Good retention on non-accredited provision

- Clear strategic direction
- Good partnership working for the benefit of learners
- Effective actions to secure improvement

Key areas for improvement

- The insufficiently effective audit of course files to monitor quality or consistency
- The insufficient specialist training for tutors in teaching learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities

Main findings

Achievement and standards

Good: Grade 2

4. Achievement and standards are good. Most learners are on accredited courses and success rates for these programmes are good and have improved significantly since the previous inspection. The retention rates on non-accredited provision are good and achievement is at least satisfactory. All learners make good progress in improving their personal and social skills. Learners participate effectively in taught sessions, quickly build confidence in practical activities and enthusiastically apply themselves to their learning programme. As identified at the previous inspection, learners' behaviour in taught sessions is good. Learners and tutors work well together in an environment of mutual respect. The standard of learners' work is at least satisfactory. Attendance is satisfactory. Punctuality is poor for a small number of groups.

Quality of provision

Satisfactory: Grade 3

5. The quality of provision is satisfactory. Teaching and learning are satisfactory and, as identified in the self-assessment report, have improved since the previous inspection. Tutors use an appropriate range of teaching methods and practical demonstrations to encourage learners to maintain interest. All tutors make good use of available resources to effectively encourage learners' participation in taught sessions. Tutors make effective use of volunteers to enable learners to achieve tasks successfully. However, equality and diversity are not always effectively promoted through teaching. Accommodation is satisfactory. All venues are accessible to learners with restricted mobility. Initial assessment and planning to meet individual learning needs have significantly improved since the previous inspection and are now satisfactory. BAES has introduced an improved individual learning plan since the start of the current academic year that tutors use effectively to monitor and promote learners' progress. In several classes, learners produce their own individual learning plans and take full responsibility for the planning and checking of their own learning.
6. Programmes and activities satisfactorily meet the needs and interests of learners. The range of accredited provision is now satisfactory and includes arts and crafts, basic cookery for independent living, digital photography and work preparation. In addition, progression routes have improved and are now satisfactory. BAES offers good progression opportunities at the same level where learners demonstrate good skills or an interest in a particular area. The service is in the process of developing further progression routes to enable learners to progress more easily to higher level programmes.
7. Learners benefit from the good partnerships. Regular meetings with partners such as community groups, leisure services and organisations that support individuals with mental or physical difficulties ensure that the needs and interests of learners are met. The service has participated successfully in partnership projects such as the production of digital curriculum vitae for learners. BAES provides a satisfactory range of enrichment activities. The service provides good opportunities for learners to celebrate their own skills development and achievement. For example, some learners host an end of year meal for their families.
8. Guidance and support are satisfactory. All learners receive satisfactory information, advice and guidance before, during and after their programme. An easy to use course guide, developed with People First Birmingham, is used effectively to inform learners'

choice of course. The service offers a suitable range of support for learners, including appropriately adapted materials, specialist equipment and volunteers for support in taught sessions. Five volunteers currently support learners. The service is aware that it needs to recruit and use more volunteers, as identified in its self-assessment report.

Leadership and management

Good: Grade 2

9. Leadership and management are good, as identified at the previous inspection. BAES provides clear strategic direction for the provision of adult and community learning for local people. A council and directorate plan support the five key objectives of the community strategy. These link well to both curriculum and area plans that focus on driving forward improvement to benefit learners. Both the sector skills area self-assessment report and associated quality improvement plan make good contributions to the achievement of strategic goals. The provider effectively monitors progress in achieving stated targets and enhancing the quality of the learning journey. Staff demonstrate a good understanding of the main aims of the service's strategic direction.

10. BAES very effectively uses its links with local organisations to plan the areas and levels of provision it offers and to further build capacity within Birmingham. The service effectively uses feedback from learners, partners and other agencies to identify gaps in curriculum provision and geographical areas not currently served. The service collaborates effectively with partners; including other training providers, support agencies, community groups and volunteer organisations to attract new learners and those from hard-to-reach groups.
11. As identified in the self-assessment report, the service has implemented effective actions to secure improvement since the previous inspection. BAES has maintained the strengths identified at the previous inspection. It has raised the quality of the areas for improvement to satisfactory or better. BAES has carried out effective actions to improve the quality of teaching and learning. A process of classroom observation, leading to detailed and evaluative written feedback on tutors' performance, is effective in identifying actions for improvement. Outcomes of assessment through observation are subject to an appropriately analytical and critical moderation process. Learners' retention and success rates have significantly improved since the previous inspection and are now good for most learners. Following a restructuring of the service, management roles and responsibilities are clear and well understood. Curriculum management, monitoring and development are now satisfactory. BAES effectively supports all tutors and uses a good range of communication methods to keep them updated on relevant service and curriculum developments. The service provides a frequent and good range of methods to ensure the sharing of best practice. Operational procedures and recording activities have improved and are now at least satisfactory. However, not all tutors have an effective understanding of all the targets they are working towards or use data sufficiently as a monitoring tool.
12. Equality of opportunity is satisfactory. As identified at the previous inspection, BAES places a clear and appropriate emphasis on using the provision to promote equality of opportunity and remove barriers to participation in learning. All staff demonstrate a good awareness of this aim and understand the part they play in its achievement. BAES uses a satisfactory range of management information to evaluate the effectiveness of strategies to monitor and promote equality of opportunity. Course promotional material is informative, welcoming and appropriately designed for ease of use by prospective learners. Targeting of groups for recruitment purposes is generally satisfactory. However, the participation rate of minority ethnic groups is comparatively low, as identified in the self-assessment report. While tutors' understanding of equality and diversity is satisfactory, they have not received sufficient training to update them on recent changes to legislation. Tutors do not effectively promote equality of opportunity in all taught sessions.
13. Quality assurance arrangements are satisfactory. The self-assessment process and subsequent self-assessment report are satisfactory. BAES involves tutors appropriately in the compilation of the self-assessment. They use a suitable range of data and feedback from stakeholders to inform the reports' evaluative and critical judgements. Inspectors agreed with most of the content of the draft report produced before the reinspection. An appropriate range of procedures is in place that covers the key stages of learning. Most of these now identify weaknesses in the provision effectively. However, as identified in the self-assessment report, the audit of course files does not provide sufficient information on the quality of completed documentation or the consistency of use by tutors.

14. The procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements. The service has a suitable child and vulnerable adult protection procedure. Referral processes to other council departments are available to provide specialist support and help. Learners and staff have an adequate understanding of how to raise any concerns. BAES has carried out appropriate vetting checks for all staff. Staff have received training in safeguarding. However, the provider recognises the need to ensure that staff receive more in-depth training for those likely to have contact with young people and vulnerable adults. Since the previous inspection, BAES has improved both the range and quantity of staff development opportunities. Attendance at training events has significantly increased. Most tutors are working towards or hold suitable teaching qualifications. However, too few tutors have received specialist training in teaching learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities.

What learners like:

- The quality of the teaching – ‘The teaching on the course is good’
- The improvement in personal self-esteem – ‘The course really helps build my confidence’
- The increased understanding of what else is available – ‘I now have an awareness of what other courses I can go on’
- The opportunity to socialise – ‘I like to meet friends’
- Access to learning resources – ‘The teacher lets us use the digital camera’
- ‘I love coming; it gets me out of the house’

What learners think could improve:

- None identified