

Medway 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
- Arts, media and publishing
- Education and training
- English for speakers of other languages
- Community Learning

Medway Council's learning and skills provision includes all the sector subject areas except social science. Inspectors sampled the provision that was not inspected in full and graded, by reviewing data, the self-assessment report and a range of other documents and by interviewing curriculum managers and observing teaching and learning, including some paired observations with the provider's staff. The findings from the sampling process contributed to overall judgements.

Description of the provider

1. Medway Council delivers its adult and community learning through Medway Adult and Community Learning Service (MACLS), which is located in the Learning and Achievement Division of its Children and Adults Directorate. MACLS is a direct provider of adult and community learning provision and operates from two main centres in Rochester and Gillingham, two local school-based evening centres and a range of community venues.
2. Kent and Medway LSC funds MACLS' provision in 16 sector subject areas from entry level through to Level 3. Courses run during the day and the evenings. MACLS has developed its offer to include Train to Gain provision in education and training. In 2007/08, 6,282 learners made nearly 9,500 enrolments, across 856 courses. Around two thirds of the learners are on non-accredited courses. During the week of the inspection, there were 3,357 learners on 330 adult and community learning courses and 118 Train to Gain learners on 17 courses.
3. Medway is the largest unitary authority in the South East. Minority ethnic groups make up 5.4% of the population overall and over 10% in some areas of Medway. The largest group is Indian who make up 2.1% of the population overall. Qualification levels in Medway are lower than in the south east and nationally. Nearly half of the local employment is in the public or retail sectors with a low percentage in the more highly paid, professional employment. The average income in Medway is 10% below the national average. A quarter of the labour force commutes out of Medway for work.

Summary of grades awarded

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

Sector subject areas

Information and communication technology	Satisfactory: Grade 3
Arts, media and publishing	Satisfactory: Grade 3
Education and training	Satisfactory: Grade 3
English for speakers of other languages	Good: Grade 2
Community learning	Satisfactory: Grade 3

Overall judgement

Effectiveness of provision

Satisfactory: Grade 3

Adult and community learning
Train to Gain

Contributory grade: Satisfactory: Grade 3
Contributory grade: Satisfactory: Grade 3

4. The overall effectiveness of provision is satisfactory. Achievement and standards are good. Success rates on accredited courses are mostly high and improving. Standards of work are good. Learners develop good skills. Success rates on some GCSE courses are low. Train to Gain programmes were slow to start and not all learners have yet completed their programmes. Retention is good.
5. The quality of provision is satisfactory. Provision in English for speakers of other languages (ESOL) is good. In information and communication technology (ICT), art, media and publishing, education and training and community learning, provision is satisfactory. Teaching and learning are satisfactory overall. In the better sessions, tutors effectively use a wide range of methods and activities. They challenge learners and have high expectations of them. In the weaker learning sessions, insufficient use is made of initial assessment to plan for individual learning and progress is insufficiently well recorded or monitored. Tutors are well qualified and resources are satisfactory.
6. Provision to meet the needs and interests of learners is satisfactory. Learners have good access to a wide range of provision at the main centres and in community venues. Courses are offered across a wide range of levels and subject areas but MACLS has a high course cancellation rate. Links with employers for Train to Gain provision are insufficiently well developed.
7. Guidance and support are satisfactory. Information and advice at recruitment and on course are effective. MACLS effectively identifies learners' additional needs and quickly provides support for learners on accredited courses. There is insufficient funding to provide additional learning support for learners on non-accredited courses.
8. Leadership and management are satisfactory. Strategic planning is appropriately aligned with Medway Council's strategic priorities. Partnerships are effective in developing provision in the community. The management of staff and internal communication is satisfactory. The arrangements for quality improvement are satisfactory but they are not yet sufficiently established or effectively improving provision overall. Equality of opportunity is satisfactory.

Capacity to improve

Satisfactory: Grade 3

9. MACLS has demonstrated that it has satisfactory capacity to improve. At the previous reinspection, the capacity to improve was judged to be good. Since that time, MACLS has gone through a significant period of uncertainty and change. Its immediate future is now more settled and the current manager has maintained an effective service, with good learner outcomes. The effectiveness of the steps taken to promote improvements is now satisfactory.

10. Learners' achievement and standards are now good overall and the quality of provision is satisfactory. The quality of two curriculum areas evaluated in the reinspection remains satisfactory and good but ICT, previously judged outstanding, is now satisfactory. Slow implementation of the Skills for Life strategy was highlighted as a key weakness and this is still the case. The arrangements for observing teaching and learning are not yet leading to sufficient improvement. The self-assessment process, overall, is satisfactory but the arrangements for the moderation of judgements in some sector subject areas are insufficiently thorough. The self-assessment report is broadly accurate. Inspectors agreed with many of its strengths and areas for improvement. Some strengths were over-estimated and some key areas for improvement were not identified. In ICT and education and training, in particular, no key areas for improvement were identified.

Key strengths

- High success rates
- Good standards of work and development of skills
- Inclusive and friendly atmosphere that promotes learning

Key areas for improvement

- Inadequate planning for individual learning on non accredited courses
- Slow development and implementation of Skills for Life strategy
- Insufficient focus on continuous improvement

Main findings

Achievement and standards

Good: Grade 2

Adult and community learning
Train to gain

Contributory grade: Good: Grade 2
Contributory grade: Satisfactory: Grade 3

11. Achievement and standards are good. The self-assessment report accurately recognised these findings. Success rates on many accredited courses are high and improving. On some accredited courses such as those in ICT, ESOL and the teaching assistants' course, success rates are high or very high. Those on some GCSE courses are low at around 60%. Train to Gain programmes were slow to start and not all learners have yet completed their programmes. Retention on accredited courses is good at around 91% in 2006/07 and 85% in 2007/08.
12. Arrangements for recognising and recording progress and achievement are not yet well developed. However, learners' standards of work are good in non-accredited courses. They develop good personal skills and self confidence. Learners produce a high standard of craft work and are well motivated. In community learning, parents develop good cooperative skills by working with their children. Learners in other courses benefit from their physical and emotional development, which they derive from courses such as yoga and dance. Retention is good on non-accredited courses at around 91% in 2006/07 and 2007/08.

Quality of provision

Satisfactory: Grade 3

Adult and community learning
Train to Gain

Contributory grade: Satisfactory: Grade 3
Contributory grade: Satisfactory: Grade 3

13. The quality of provision and of teaching and learning are satisfactory overall. The self-assessment report accurately recognised most of the findings for this aspect. In ESOL, much teaching and learning is good. In other areas, including the Train to Gain provision, they are generally satisfactory. In arts, media and publishing, the quality of teaching and learning is mixed. In the better sessions learning activities are well organised and managed. Tutors set high expectations, challenge learners and successfully employ a wide range of teaching methods. In weaker sessions, the pace of lessons is too slow and learners are insufficiently challenged. Activities are sometimes repeated and too little account is taken of the differing needs and abilities of individual learners. Arrangements for the identification of learners' additional needs for literacy, language and numeracy support are not well established.
14. Learning resources are satisfactory overall. Tutors are appropriately qualified and experienced. Some classrooms are well equipped but information and learning

technology (ILT) is not used sufficiently in many areas to improve teaching and learning. In arts, media and publishing, too much use is made of secondary source material. In ICT, tutors have difficulty in accessing some of the more up-to-date software packages.

15. Assessment is satisfactory overall. In accredited learning programmes, formal assessment is effectively carried out against course requirements. However, for learners on non-accredited programmes, planning for individual learning is inadequate. Initial assessment is insufficiently used to determine a learner's level at the start of the course and to set individual learning goals. Assessment for these learners is often informal and against group targets and records work completed rather than progress made. This was not sufficiently reflected in the self-assessment report.
16. Provision is satisfactory in meeting the needs and interests of learners. Learners have good access to a wide range of provision. Courses are offered at entry level through to Level 3 and across all but one of the sector subject areas. Effective partnerships with community organisations enable MACLS to target provision at high priority communities. Links with employers for Train to Gain provision are less well developed.
17. Guidance and support are satisfactory. Information and advice at recruitment and on course are effective. Prospective learners are given a basic initial assessment, often by telephone, which helps to ensure that learners are on the most suitable course for their needs and level of ability. Guidance for progression is satisfactory overall and good for ESOL learners. These learners benefit from the services of a specialist advice and guidance worker.
18. Learners' additional needs are effectively identified and support for learners on accredited courses is put in place quickly. Insufficient funding is available to provide additional learning support for learners on non-accredited courses. Tutors and other staff support learners satisfactorily. MACLS is responsive in providing appropriate and basic adaptive technology such as adapted ICT equipment and materials in different formats.

Leadership and management

Satisfactory: Grade 3

Adult and community learning
Train to Gain
Equality of opportunity

Contributory grade: Satisfactory: Grade 3
Contributory grade: satisfactory: Grade 3
Contributory grade: Satisfactory: Grade 3

19. Leadership and management are satisfactory. The self-assessment report accurately reflected the inspection findings for this aspect. MACLS has experienced a period of turbulence over the past year with significant staff changes and uncertainty about its status. Its immediate future is now more settled and the current manager has maintained an effective service, with good

learner outcomes. The strategic direction of the service is aligned well with the corporate priorities of Medway Council to meet the needs of high priority groups.

20. Data is accurate and well organised. Training in its use is provided and the data manager provides good personal support to staff. Reports on performance indicators are accessible to managers and used frequently.
21. Curriculum management is satisfactory. The day to day running of the service is efficient. The service's operational plan covers key areas and progress is monitored regularly. A comprehensive set of policies are in place, although some of these, such as the Skills for Life strategy have been slow to develop, and are not fully implemented by all staff.
22. Partnerships with community groups and organisations are used to good effect to develop community provision. The general course offer continues to be very wide. In some areas of the curriculum, particularly ICT, courses are not sufficiently targeted towards learners' current needs. The uncertainty about the future of the service has delayed effective curriculum planning and a high proportion of classes are cancelled, over 30% in 2007/08. A major review of the curriculum is planned this year. Links with employers for the new Train to Gain provision are, as yet, insufficiently well developed.
23. Equality of opportunity is satisfactory. MACLS provides a friendly and inclusive service that promotes learning. Interaction between learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and other learners is good. Staff have a good understanding of equality and diversity. It is promoted well in lessons, particularly in community learning and ESOL. Participation and success rates are monitored for different groups of learners. The minority ethnic profile of staff matches that of learners and both of these are considerably higher than the local population. MACLS satisfactorily complies with equalities duties. An equality statement and a race equality scheme are in place. The service's two main centres are fully accessible to wheelchair users, and many community-based venues are accessible. A good range of enabling equipment is provided for learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. The service does not have a specific policy on promotion of the Every Child Matters (ECM) themes, but relevant activities take place where appropriate and there has been recent ECM training for all curriculum managers.
24. Staff take safeguarding seriously, but procedures are not thorough enough. The service does not fully meet government requirements. Criminal Record Bureau checks are carried out for all staff but current levels of staff training are insufficient to ensure all staff are fully aware of the procedures to safeguard young people and vulnerable adults.
25. The focus on continuous improvement is insufficient. Arrangements for quality improvement are satisfactory but are not yet sufficiently established or effectively improving provision overall. MACLS systematically monitors course files, and learning activities, but the focus is on quality assurance rather than improving the

quality of provision. Procedures for evaluating teaching and learning do not improve quality sufficiently. Observation records do not explore the learning taking place. Observation grades are insufficiently moderated. A broad range of staff development activities is offered and tutors feel well supported. However, MACLS does not sufficiently analyse the effect of staff development or share good practice across the sector subject areas. Learner surveys are carried out, but feedback to learners is not comprehensive.

What learners like:

- Knowledgeable and friendly tutors who make sessions interesting
- The social atmosphere where “you can meet interesting people who understand each other”
- Well organised courses held at convenient times
- Good choice of courses
- “my tutor has given me the support to enable me to grow in confidence and complete my course”
- Reviewing portfolio with tutor and “keeping track of progress”
- Efficient enrolment run by friendly administrative staff
- Centres are close to home
- Being able to contact the tutor, if the need arises, between classes

What learners think could improve:

- The sessions should be longer
- “More practicing to speak English in class” (ESOL learner)
- “The availability and timing of some courses and more courses in the evenings”
- Car parking, particularly at the Gillingham centre
- The delayed starts to some courses
- The availability of paid jobs rather than voluntary work for classroom assistants
- “Too much group teaching and not enough individual tuition”
- Information about the future of the service

Sector subject areas

Information and communication technology

Satisfactory: Grade 3

Context

26. MACLS offers accredited programmes from entry level to Level 3 and a range of non-accredited programmes with progression opportunities from introductory to advanced programmes including some specialist software programmes. It employs 13 part-time tutors. In 2007/08, there were 217 learners on accredited programmes 448 learners on non-accredited first steps programmes

Strengths

- High success rates in accredited provision
- Good range of accessible community venues

Areas for improvement

- Insufficient planning and monitoring of individual learning
- Insufficient use of management information to plan and develop the curriculum
- Ineffective self-assessment process

Achievement and standards

27. Achievement and standards are good. Success rates on accredited programmes are consistently high. They have increased from 91% in 2005/06 to 97% in 2007/08. Retention at 94% is high on both accredited and non-accredited courses.

28. Standards of work on non-accredited programmes are satisfactory. Arrangements for recognising and recording progress and achievement in non-accredited learning are insufficiently well developed and the recorded achievement data is unreliable. However, learners satisfactorily develop useful technical skills. Attendance is satisfactory.

Quality of provision

29. The quality of provision is satisfactory. Teaching and learning are satisfactory overall. Most tutors provide good individual coaching and support. They give clear explanations when learners ask for help. All classrooms are well equipped with a good range of ILT resources. However, tutors do not use these resources enough to support teaching and learning and to diversify the range of teaching methods used.

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30. Individual learning is insufficiently well planned and monitored. Schemes of work and lesson plans are standardised and tutors fail to identify and plan for different individual learning needs. A satisfactory initial assessment is used to identify learners' existing IT skills and confidence levels. However, this information is not used to plan learning or adequately identify and record individual learning goals. The range of assessment methods used does not systematically check that learners retain newly acquired knowledge. Individual progress is not effectively or routinely monitored. It is largely measured against planned course outcomes on a tutor record sheet. Few links exist between individual learning goals, initial assessment and the tutor record sheet. Progress reviews are carried out at intervals. However, these summarise the learners' completion of work against the course objectives and are insufficiently detailed about learners' achievement of personal learning targets. Target setting is inadequate, particularly in setting and agreeing long-, medium- and short-term learning goals.
31. Provision is satisfactory to meet the needs and interests of learners. ICT courses are offered at Levels 1, 2 and 3. MACLS use the programme effectively to encourage learners in the local community to take their first steps into learning. However, the range of courses does not always match the needs of some current learners or allow them immediate access the subject matter they require.
32. Guidance and support are satisfactory. Tutors and centre staff are supportive and welcoming. Learners receive a useful induction and gain an appropriate awareness of safe working practices. Learners receive effective information, advice and guidance at recruitment and whilst following a course.

Leadership and management

33. Leadership and management are satisfactory. Staff are experienced and appropriately qualified or working towards the required qualification. Most staff are registered with the Institute for Learning.
34. Classrooms are well resourced with interactive white boards and projectors. Some software is out of date. Staff have insufficient access to the latest versions that many learners use at home or in local public libraries. However, to meet demand for training in current software such as Vista and Office 2007, courses are being established where learners bring their own laptops in and use them during the training.
35. Arrangements for the observation of teaching and learning are systematic but observation reports focus insufficiently on learning and identify few actions for improvement. The process does not improve the quality of teaching and learning sufficiently. Routine procedures for monitoring the quality of other aspects of the ICT curriculum exist but their effectiveness is weak. Often the emphasis is on auditing documentation in course files rather than the quality of the provision or action planning to improve it.

36. Insufficient use is made of management information to plan and develop the curriculum. This was an area for improvement identified in the self-assessment report overall but not identified in the curriculum report. A range of data reports are produced and reviewed. However, this information is insufficiently well analysed or used to plan and develop the curriculum to meet local needs or to identify potential gaps in provision. Data on learner progression is inadequate. The current arrangements do not provide effective information on learner progression between courses. MACLS has cancelled 43% of courses since September 2008 due to low enrolments. An analysis of data for the same period in 2007/08 identifies 43% course cancellation, against a maximum target of 15%. Some course starts are delayed due to low enrolments.
37. The self-assessment process is ineffective in improving the provision. It is inclusive and involves a satisfactory range of staff. However, it is insufficiently critical and did not identify any areas for improvement.

Arts, media and publishing

Satisfactory: Grade 3

Context

38. MACLS offers a range of art, craft, music, dance and photography classes. At the time of inspection, there were 68 courses running, mainly in art and craft and a small number in other related areas including design, music, dance and photography. Six accredited courses are available at Levels 2 and 3. The courses take place on the two main sites and at community settings, during the day, the evenings and on some weekends. There are currently 773 learners. Around half of the new learners are aged over 60, a targeted priority group for the service. This area is managed by two curriculum managers. Twenty-nine tutors teach on these courses.

Strengths

- High standards of creative work in craft classes
- High retention rates
- Good personal and social gains for learners

Areas for improvement

- Poor teaching and learning in art
- Insufficient use of information and learning technology
- Insufficient use of individual learning plans to monitor learning

Achievement and standards

39. The standard of creative work is high in craft classes. Learners work with enthusiasm developing new skills focusing on design and creativity. They are well motivated and absorbed in their learning. Learners' portfolios of work demonstrate their good progress. New learners make significant progress and are able to complete complex tasks in a short time, using research and sketchbooks to formulate ideas. All the learners are confident to experiment with fabrics and techniques to produce work to a good standard. Peer support in the practical sessions effectively promotes learning. Learners assist each other with tasks, share materials and discuss each other's work in a lively and constructive way. Success rates for accredited provision are high.

40. Retention rates are high on both accredited and non-accredited courses. Retention on non-accredited courses was 93% in 2004/05, and 2005/06 and 95% in 2007/08. Class registers show a pattern of good attendance.

41. Learners make good social and personal gains. They improve their confidence and self-esteem and benefit from the therapeutic and social aspects of attending the classes. For example, learners in stained glass, pottery classes and jewellery make items for family and friends. Some learners accept commissions.

Quality of provision

42. The quality of provision is satisfactory. Teaching and learning overall are satisfactory. In the better sessions, more experienced learners motivate new ones who aspire to reach the standard of their more advanced peers. Some teaching and learning is good or better.

43. In art and design classes, teaching and learning are poor. Art classes make up 40% of the programme and include learners at beginners, intermediate and advanced levels. Many learners attend the same classes for a number of years. Tutors have low expectations of more advanced learners and are reluctant to challenge and encourage them to explore the new ideas through a range of media and processes. Too much secondary source material is used. Where objects are used for still life they are old, dusty and unstimulating. Many sessions are slow in pace. They have the atmosphere of a club rather than a learning session. Without sufficient challenge, learners in established groups repeat exercises they have already carried out.

44. Tutors make insufficient use of ILT to promote learning, develop research skills, and to enhance presentation. In the very large art rooms, some learners were unable to see the art publication being used for presentation at the front of the room.

45. Insufficient use is made of individual learning plans to plan and monitor learning. The learning plans include group outcomes and whilst learners are encouraged to include personal learning aims, they rarely do so. Individual learning plans do not contribute to the learner's or tutor's ability to monitor the progress made from a specific starting point. Tutors keep individual learning plans but update them infrequently, as little as once every term. A large proportion of the document is not completed. Tutors use a recording document but do not use it in conjunction with the individual learning plan to monitor learning. Tutors have had some training on the process to recognise and record progress and achievement, but do not fully understand it. Some tutors use digital photography to record finished pieces. However, the results are not catalogued for future reference but stored in the tutor's folder without learners' names or dates.

46. MACLS offers a satisfactory range of courses in most aspects of this sector subject area. All sessions include learners of different abilities. MACLS actively promotes learners' work by exhibitions throughout the two main centres and in other community venues. Many learners have sold work from these exhibitions. Group visits to galleries, exhibitions and museums provide good cultural links that enrich the lives of the learners. Tutors keep them informed of forthcoming exhibitions.

47. Guidance and support are satisfactory both at recruitment and on course. Tutors are aware of learners who need individual support and adequately provide this in learning sessions. Classes include learners with a range of abilities. Learners often remain for a long time in the same class.

Leadership and management

48. Curriculum management is satisfactory. Course files are regularly monitored. The team of part-time tutors are appropriately qualified and experienced. MACLS offers a range of staff training and professional development, but some is poorly attended. Equality of opportunity is satisfactory.

49. The observations of teaching and learning are insufficiently thorough and reliable. The grades awarded are often too generous and not sufficiently supported by evidence. Observations are carried out by non-specialists. Comments on teaching and learning are often general rather than specific and are insufficiently evaluative. Tutors judged to be of a satisfactory or inadequate standard are monitored more closely and more frequently. However, these arrangements are so far ineffective in improving much of the teaching and learning.

Education and training

Satisfactory: Grade 3

Context

50. MACLS provides 14 national vocational qualification (NVQ) courses at Level 2 and one course at Level 3 in supporting teaching and learning in schools. These take place at MACLS' learning centres and in community venues. Eight of these courses are organised under the Train to Gain initiative. There are 145 learners on the NVQ courses. Sixteen learners are enrolled on the 15-week evening course, preparing to teach in the lifelong learning sector. All courses are part-time. Seven tutors deliver the courses.

Strengths

- High retention rates
- High success rates on Level 2 teaching assistants' courses
- Good development of personal and occupational skills

Areas for improvement

- Insufficiently individualised learning
- Insufficient resources
- Unsatisfactory Skills for Life arrangements
- Ineffective self-assessment process

Achievement and standards

51. Achievement and standards are good. From 2004 to 2008, retention rates have been consistently high at between 85% and 91%. For the same four year period, success rates on the teaching assistants' courses were high and ranged between 76% and 88%, with three of those years being over 80%.

52. The standard of learners' work is good. Teaching assistants use their practical experience effectively for collecting relevant evidence for their portfolios. Trainee teachers' work is of a good standard and most learners meet the requirements of the qualification.

53. Learners' development of personal and occupational skills is good. They improve their team-working skills and increase their awareness of group dynamics. Improved professional knowledge enables learners to become more effective classroom assistants or teachers. They develop a good understanding of health and safety, accurate record keeping, and their duty of care. They acquire a good basic knowledge of child development and begin to explore categories of abuse and the adverse effect it has on children's health and well-being. Learners on the introductory course in teaching in the lifelong learning sector begin to develop

good lesson planning competencies and a good understanding of the importance of learner motivation.

Quality of provision

54. The quality of provision is satisfactory as is teaching and learning overall. Lessons are planned and delivered satisfactorily. Most sessions include a suitable combination of theory and practical activities. Tutors sometimes evaluate their lessons but the evaluations contain insufficient depth and constructive criticism to bring about progressive improvement in teaching and learning.
55. Learning is insufficiently individualised. Planning takes too little account of the differences in learners' ability, prior experience and previous attainments. Teaching assistants' existing skills, knowledge and experience are not formally assessed when they begin the course to establish their learning needs. Although all learners have individual learning plans, they are not used effectively to plan, monitor and manage on- and off-the-job learning. Learners are not sufficiently encouraged to manage their own learning under their tutor's guidance.
56. Resources for off-the-job learning are insufficient. They are restricted to handouts, flip charts and data projectors. Photocopied handouts are over-used. Significant omissions in primary school resources inhibit the ability of teaching assistants to develop their expertise in using them and reduce the variety and quality of teaching and learning. For example, there are no primary school-related computer programmes, no age-graded readers and no literacy and numeracy learning aids. MACLS does not have simulated classrooms in which learners can practice and demonstrate their skills and knowledge.
57. Learners have access to a satisfactory range of teaching assistants' and teacher training courses. Information, advice and guidance are satisfactory. A good level of in-class support is provided by tutors. Tutors visit teaching assistants in their placement schools and satisfactorily assess them according to the NVQ standards.
58. The Skills for Life arrangements in education and training are unsatisfactory. MACLS does not pursue a whole organisation approach to Skills for Life nor does it have a comprehensive and inclusive Skills for Life strategy and action plan. Learners are not regularly assessed for Skills for Life competencies when they begin their training. Some learners who are initially assessed are not given their test results and no follow-up learning is recommended. Few, if any, learners have a diagnostic assessment to highlight skills gaps and required development. Literacy and numeracy are not integrated within the education and training courses and learning opportunities are lost. The importance of high standards and qualifications in literacy and numeracy for teaching assistants and teachers in the lifelong learning sector are disregarded. Learners' ICT skills are not routinely assessed and their ICT competencies are not developed.

Leadership and management

59. Leadership and management are satisfactory overall. A newly-appointed manager satisfactorily manages all Train to Gain courses. In the absence of a manager for education and training courses, the skills for work curriculum planning and development manager temporarily and satisfactorily manages these courses. Staff communication is satisfactory. Tutors regularly attend staff meetings and standardisation events. Management information is readily available and it is satisfactorily used to monitor performance. During the inspection week, 30% of education and training and Train to Gain courses were not running.
60. Equality and diversity are satisfactory. Learners have a basic awareness of equality of opportunity and what constitutes discrimination and harassment. Some learners on teaching assistant courses, who pay course fees, perceive themselves unequally treated when compared with Train to Gain learners for whom course fees are paid.
61. MACLS does not have formal contractual arrangements with schools in which teaching assistants are placed. The quality of learners' experience varies. In some cases, it is unsatisfactory. The service has taken insufficient safeguarding action to ensure that no learner is left alone with school pupils until appropriate clearance is obtained.
62. The self-assessment process is ineffective. The report does not accurately identify the strengths and areas for development or thoroughly evaluate the provision. The sector subject area has been significantly over-graded by two grades. Although the Train to Gain provision began in February 2008, a detailed self-assessment report has yet to be produced.

English for speakers of other languages

Good: Grade 2

Context

63. MACLS offers 39 part time ESOL courses at its two main centres and two community venues. Courses, from pre-entry to Level 2, are offered during the day and in the evenings. Learners attend for between two and six hours each week. At inspection a total of 392 learners were studying on ESOL courses. Some 72% of current learners are female. Around 40% are offered the opportunity to achieve external accreditation. The area is managed by a curriculum manager. There are 18 part time tutors and a specialist information, advice and guidance worker.

Strengths

- High success rates
- Good standard of work and development of learners' skills
- Much good teaching and learning
- Good information, advice and guidance

Areas for improvement

- Unsatisfactory attendance in some sessions
- Insufficient use of information and learning technology for teaching and learning
- Insufficient formal recording of individual targets and progress

Achievement and standards

64. Achievements and standards are good. Success rates are high for learners doing both the external ESOL Skills for Life qualifications and the certificate in English. Success rates are very high on external qualifications and have been for the last three years. There has been a significant improvement in success rates in 2007/08 on both long and short certificate in English courses.

65. The standard of work and development of learners' skills are good. Learners demonstrate good acquisition of a range of skills. They become more confident and learn to use written and spoken language more accurately. Learners develop a good range of language, employability and citizenship related skills. Assessed class and homework are of a good standard. They make good progress and successfully complete tasks. Attainment is good and students' perform well in both written and oral work.

66. Attendance in some sessions is unsatisfactory. A range of attendance monitoring strategies is in place but have yet to influence improving rates across the curriculum area.

67. Progression is not systematically analysed for the 60% of ESOL learners who continue with studies at MACLS.

Quality of provision

68. Teaching and learning are good. Detailed planning includes target setting for achievable group outcomes. Carefully selected and relevant topics capture learners' interest. Tutors successfully employ a wide range of teaching methods to assist learners of differing ability and skill levels. A good variety of well devised learning materials is used and learning activities are well organised and managed. Skilful teaching ensures effective learner contribution. However, small group sizes in some sessions restrict the planned activities tutors can effectively deliver, particularly when organising pair and group tasks. Most staff are well qualified and experienced. Regular and helpful checks on learners' work assist with their learning of language skills.

69. An inclusive learning environment is created and tutors have a very good rapport with learners. Learners are enthusiastic and keen to learn. They are very positive about the assistance they receive from tutors. They are encouraged to work together and are often engaged and absorbed in purposeful and well organised tasks.

70. In a small number of sessions, tutors make insufficient use of ILT to support teaching and learning. Access to specialised equipment is insufficient and rarely available in classrooms. When available, tutors do not adequately integrate ILT resources into the teaching and learning.

71. The formal recording of individual targets and progress is insufficient. Practice in setting individual targets varies greatly. In the better sessions, the outcomes of initial and diagnostic assessment are used well to set individual targets. In some, they are used insufficiently well. Learners are frequently asked to record the work done in sessions rather than what has been learnt. Insufficient time is made for formal monitoring of progress on an individual basis. Learners are vague about the purpose of their individual learning plan.

72. The range of provision is satisfactory and meets the needs of the local community. MACLS works effectively with other providers to extend language learning opportunities for the local population. The self-assessment report recognises the need to widen scope of provision for local employers and community groups.

73. Information, guidance and support are good. A specialist member of staff efficiently carries out initial assessment and accurately places new learners on the most appropriate course. In addition, an enhanced guidance service is offered to learners. This successfully assists them with gaining employment and voluntary work and in contacting local support organisations or further and higher

education. MACLS has productive formal links with specialist agencies to assist those ESOL learners with particular needs.

Leadership and management

74. Leadership and Management are satisfactory. Curriculum management is effective. The large team of sessional staff are well supported and communication is good. Essential information is readily available electronically and much support is provided to help tutors to understand it and use it effectively in its use. Regular formal and informal meetings keep staff well informed. The focus on improving the skills of staff and providing useful continuous professional development opportunities is good.
75. Accommodation is generally satisfactory though some classrooms are not suitable for language learning.
76. The observation of teaching and learning process is satisfactory but overestimates the quality of teaching and learning. The helpful findings of curriculum monitoring visits are not used enough to further improve the quality of teaching and learning. Insufficient use is made of performance data to set improvement targets at course level.
77. The self-assessment report is broadly accurate but does not sufficiently identify areas for improvement. Staff are fully involved in course review though common findings are not fully incorporated into the self-assessment report. The progress to further improve the provision since the previous inspection is slow.
78. The promotion of equality and diversity is satisfactory. Tutors successfully integrate topics that promote cultural differences and regularly incorporate learners' differing experiences and background in sessions.

Community learning

Satisfactory: Grade 3

Context

79. Community learning in MACLS includes family learning and 'first steps' learning in areas such as fitness, languages, computing, art and construction. Family learning consists of wider family learning and family language, literacy and numeracy (FLLN). Courses are offered during the daytime, in the evenings and occasionally at weekends. In 2007/8, around 1,300 learners were enrolled on family learning and community learning courses. Learners on "first steps' courses are not included in these numbers as they were not separately identified as following a community learning programme at that time. At the time of inspection, 530 learners were enrolled on 54 community learning programmes. Of those, 20% are from minority ethnic backgrounds and 10% declared a disability.

Strengths

- Good development of learners' confidence and skills
- Good teaching and learning in family learning
- Wide range of courses to meet local need

Areas for improvement

- Insufficient planning for the individual needs of learners
- Poor monitoring of learner progress in 'first steps' provision
- Insufficient strategic planning for community learning

Achievement and standards

80. Achievement and standards are good. In 'first steps' provision learners acquire confidence and develop skills. Well motivated learners participate enthusiastically and are confident in putting their learning into practice. In family learning, parents develop good cooperative skills by working with their children. They are better able to produce their own cheap, healthy meals. In joint parent and child sessions, adults actively engage in their own learning. In family literacy, language and numeracy parents increase their understanding of important family matters, such as safety in the home. They are also better able to support their children with school work.

81. Retention on family learning courses is good. Participation in first steps learning by new learners is good, although in one class observed at the time of inspection learners had attended for many years. Some learners progress to further courses in the same subject area or have the confidence to try new areas of learning.

Quality of provision

82. The quality of provision is satisfactory. Teaching and learning is good in family learning. A wide range of activities and the brisk pace of learning motivates learners to achieve and develop skills. Tutors make effective use of informal learning to extend knowledge. Good use of practical activities help learners better understand numeracy topics. In one class, appropriate integration of ICT increased interest, but this is not widespread.
83. Teaching and learning in 'first steps' provision is satisfactory. In a better class, the tutor seized an opportunity to draw attention to cultural issues. In a weaker class, poor management of punctuality left some learners under occupied at the beginning of the session.
84. Planning for the individual needs of learners is insufficient. Standardised lesson plans are not sufficiently adjusted to reflect the individual needs of learners. Meeting the range of needs of individual learners is addressed by a standard statement that is not linked to specific learners on the course. Initial assessments are carried out in FLLN and they make some contribution to planning. In much of the 'first steps' provision initial assessment is not routine and when undertaken, it is not used to identify specific needs of individual learners or to contribute to planning.
85. The monitoring of learner progress in 'first steps' provision is poor. The tools to monitor progress are provided for all tutors to use with their learners. However, in most of the provision these are not used effectively. In practical classes, there is often insufficient discussion about and recording of individual progress. In other classes, the quality of recording is often poor, with insufficiently detailed comments. In family learning, monitoring of learner progress is generally better, but not consistently good across all provision.
86. A wide range of courses effectively meets local need. Courses are offered in schools, community centres and children's centres across Medway in partnership with local community organisations. Learners value the local provision and many speak positively of its importance in enabling them to learn. Complex family arrangements and cost make travel difficult. MALS has a very strong commitment to community learning in spite of a shrinking programme. The impact of local provision benefits individuals, schools and communities and is valued by partners. However, a high rate of course cancellation does have some negative effect on learners.
87. Information and advice is satisfactory. Useful course information sheets are routinely provided. Some tutors have the experience and skills to give good progression advice. Arrangements for the additional support of learners vary. In 'first steps' provision, there is insufficient support available. Childcare arrangements support family learning.

Leadership and management

88. Plans to drive the service forward in this area of work are underdeveloped. A statement on 'first steps' and a strategy for family learning have yet to be shared with staff. Some links are made to Medway Council's community plan, and the service has its own plans for the future. It is too early to see the full impact. Roles and responsibilities are insufficiently clear to effectively develop the community provision. Informal communication between managers is good. Links are strongest across the 3 family learning managers. Staffing gaps and temporary arrangements slow down progress and there are few opportunities to share good practice. Staff development is satisfactory, with more opportunities in family learning than 'first steps'.
89. There are systematic arrangements to monitor the quality of the provision but the effectiveness is variable. Often the focus is on auditing existing documentation in course files, with little or no emphasis on learning. However, curriculum monitoring visits in family learning often offer useful suggestions to support improvements in teaching and learning. Self-assessment arrangements are satisfactory in family learning. Observations of teaching and learning reveal a tendency to over grade. Few actions for improvement are identified and new tutors are often observed too late.
90. Promotion of equality and diversity is good. Keen intervention by MALS after a racist incident in the community led to an innovative partnership with a local school to run provision to raise awareness of different cultures.

Annex

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+			
		Starts – Transfers	ACL Provider Rate	National Rate	<i>Diff</i>
1 long	06/07	914	66.7	72	-4.3
	07/08*	831	76	N/A	
2 long	06/07	503	69.6	69.5	+0.1
	07/08*	494	66	N/A	
Short**	06/07	407	66.1	81.5	-15
	07/08*	585	77.5	N/A	

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

** Courses over 5 weeks long