

Wolverhampton Adult Education Service

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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
- Arts, media and publishing
- Classical and modern foreign languages
- Preparation for life and work

Inspectors sampled adult and community learning provision in health, public services and care and information and communication technology (ICT), but did not report on it separately. The provision in the remaining subject sector areas was too small to be included in this inspection.

Description of the provider

1. Wolverhampton Adult Education Service (WAES) contracts with the Black Country LSC to deliver adult and community learning and work-based learning. WAES' head of service and three senior managers are responsible for the provision. Seven service managers are each responsible for a particular functional area or theme. The eight curriculum service managers are responsible for the planning and delivery of the curriculum, supported by a team of coordinators.
2. Since the October 2006 reinspection, WAES has relocated to the directorate for adults and community within Wolverhampton City Council (the Council). WAES' senior management team, the directorate management team and the Council's performance management panel now monitor the quality of provision. The head of WAES reports to the director and to the portfolio holder for leisure and community.
3. Courses are offered in 10 sector subject areas, but some have very few enrolments. Classes are taught in 82 venues across the city, the service directly delivers all provision. At the time of inspection, 2076 learners made 2440 enrolments on accredited adult and community learning programmes and 2235 learners made 2593 enrolments on non-accredited programmes. Forty-six learners were following a Train to Gain programme. The value of the service's budget is £4.1 million.
4. WAES serves an urban population of around 237,000 people, which includes districts of significant deprivation, particularly in the city centre. The local unemployment rate of 5% is much higher than the national rate of around 2.3%. The percentage of pupils gaining at least five GCSE passes at A* to C, is significantly below the national average. Some 33% of learners are of minority ethnic backgrounds, compared with 22% of people with such backgrounds in the local community.

Summary of grades awarded

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

Sector subject areas

Health, public services and care	Satisfactory: Grade 3
Arts, media and publishing	Good: Grade 2
Classical and modern foreign languages	Good: Grade 2
Preparation for life and work	Satisfactory: Grade 3

Overall judgement

Effectiveness of provision

Good: Grade 2

Adult and community learning
Train to Gain

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

5. The overall effectiveness of the provision is good. Achievement and standards, the quality of provision, leadership and management and equality of opportunity overall are also good. The overall effectiveness of work-based learning is satisfactory. Achievement and standards and leadership and management of work-based learning are also satisfactory. The quality of provision is good.
6. Provision is good in arts, media and publishing and in classical and modern foreign languages. Health, public services and care and preparation for life and work provision are satisfactory.

Capacity to improve
Good: Grade 2

7. WAES demonstrates a good capacity to improve. Its overall strategy for improving and developing the service since the previous inspection and reinspection has been effective. Inspection grades have improved. The service has a clear direction and has developed and improved the provision through the introduction and use of a comprehensive quality improvement system. The service's performance management framework links closely to the Common Inspection Framework and provides WAES with a thorough process that makes good use of a range of information to evaluate all aspects of the provision. WAES makes good use of the views of learners and partners to plan and implement improvement strategies. Data is accurate and well presented in graphical and tabular form. Staff at all levels make effective use of management information to improve quality and to raise standards. Learner success rates have improved in most sector subject areas. Teaching and learning have also improved. Most of the areas for improvement identified at previous inspection visits have been successfully tackled.
8. The self-assessment process is satisfactory. All staff contribute to the process. The views of all stakeholders are taken into account. The self-assessment report is evaluative and broadly accurate in identifying strengths and areas for improvement. The report was particularly accurate in identifying the correct grades and judgements for overall effectiveness of provision, achievement and standards, leadership and management and equality of opportunity. However, grades for two sector subject areas were too generous. For instance, the service judged provision in classical and modern foreign languages to be outstanding but inspectors found it to be good. The self-assessment reported that preparation for life and work provision was good but inspectors found that this provision was satisfactory. The Train to Gain provision in health, public services and care was not graded in the self-assessment report.

Key strengths

- Good achievement of skills
- Much good teaching and learning
- Wide range of courses to meet local needs
- Good partnership arrangements
- Good arrangements to support learners with literacy and language needs
- Good strategic direction
- Very effective quality improvement arrangements to manage performance
- Good arrangements to widen participation by under-represented learners

Key areas for improvement

- Insufficiently individualised target-setting for learners
- Narrow range of employer links
- Incomplete safeguarding arrangements

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

9. Achievement and standards are good overall, as acknowledged in the self-assessment report. In work-based learning, they are satisfactory. Learners achieve good skills on WAES programmes. Train to Gain learners develop their existing skills and acquire new skills, which help them to carry out their work role more effectively. Learners on arts programmes make imaginative use of media in their work and modern foreign languages learners develop good speaking and listening skills in the foreign language they are studying.
10. Success rates on the Access to Higher Education course and on accredited courses in modern foreign languages are outstanding. Success rates on long accredited courses at level 1 and 2 are broadly satisfactory. The success rate on accredited short courses is satisfactory. It improved to 77% in 2007/08 from 69.6% in the previous year, but remains slightly below the 2006/07 national rate of 82.9%. Success rates for male and female learners are broadly similar. The overall success rate for learners from the nine most deprived wards in the city has increased each year for the last three years from 68% to 88% in 2007/08. Work-based learning success rates are satisfactory.

Quality of provision

Good: Grade 2

Adult and community learning
Train to Gain

Contributory grade: Good: Grade 2
Contributory grade: Good: Grade 2

11. The overall quality of adult and community learning provision and of work-based learning is good, as recognised in the self-assessment report. Much teaching and learning is good in most sector subject areas inspected. The best sessions are well managed, planned and prepared. Learners participate enthusiastically in sessions. Tutors use a wide range of teaching methods that sustain learners' interest and participation. Tutors know their learners well and differentiate appropriately.
12. The weaker lessons lack variety and challenge. In a few modern foreign languages classes, learners use too much English in talking to each other or when asking questions. In others, too much time is spent on reading and writing activities. In some classes for English for speakers of other languages (ESOL), a narrow range of learning activities and unimaginative learning materials are used. Learners are not sufficiently encouraged to practice speaking skills. They often work in the same pairs for the whole lesson and some activities last too long. Tutors do not always correct learners' work.

13. Target-setting for learners is insufficiently individualised. Learning objectives in non-accredited learning are often generic group outcomes. Where individual targets are set, they are often vague or aspirational rather than realistic and achievable. Tutors do not always record personal goals or individual learning objectives in individual learning plans. Progress against these targets cannot be clearly measured.
14. The extent to which programmes meet the needs of all learners' is good. This is recognised in the self-assessment report. WAES offers a wide range of courses to meet learners' needs. Courses are offered in 10 sector subject areas from entry level to level 4. Many courses are established following consultations with the service's learning broker team who identify opportunities for learning programmes that meet community needs and Council priorities. The service works closely with other directorates of the Council to offer a wide range of courses to promote health and fitness, Skills for Life, employability and personal and community development learning. Most learners are able to attend provision close to where they live and at times that suit their personal, work and childcare commitments. WAES' senior managers have been very careful to offer focused provision that meets specific identified needs that contribute to its mission statement to promote learning in areas of relative deprivation.
15. Guidance and support arrangements are satisfactory. Arrangements to support learners with literacy and language needs are good. Two additional learning support tutors were recently appointed to provide literacy and numeracy support across the service. These specialist tutors provide effectively targeted support to learners on craft and media courses, professional studies, ICT and Access courses. They also work closely with subject tutors to identify learners' needs and to plan personalised learning programmes. A range of methods is used to provide support, including in-class monitoring and observation. Learners with dyslexia are effectively assessed and receive good quality support to help them achieve. Information, advice and guidance are satisfactory overall. However, Train to Gain learners on health and social care programmes do not receive sufficient information about further vocational training or courses to help them plan their career.

Leadership and management

Good: Grade 2

Adult and community learning

Contributory grade: Good: Grade 2

Train to Gain

Contributory grade: Satisfactory: Grade 3

Equality of opportunity

Contributory grade: Good: Grade 2

16. Leadership and management are good overall and satisfactory for work-based learning. WAES' strategic direction is good. The service's mission statement clearly prioritises support for individuals and communities living in areas of high deprivation to achieve their learning aims. The strategic plan recognises the need to promote skills development and employability, to develop progression pathways across the priority neighbourhoods and to further develop and improve the provision within the recently imposed constraints of the Council's savings plan. WAES has planned well to meet the Council's financial objectives by reducing its accommodation, increasing external income, restructuring the service and sharing learning venues with other providers.
17. Partnership arrangements are good. WAES and its partners work closely together to benefit learners and staff in providing funding opportunities, staff development, support, guidance, networking opportunities and promoting the sharing of good practice. Learning opportunities in the local communities have increased through improved geographical coverage and access to specialist expertise to meet the diverse needs of learners. Links with education partners promote good opportunities to share good practice and to plan a coherent curriculum offer for the city that does not duplicate provision. Educational resources are shared with partners to maximise value for money. Employers speak highly of the WAES courses that their employees have successfully completed and find that their staff are more confident in dealing with customers and clients.
18. Quality improvement arrangements to manage performance are very effective. The service's recently introduced performance management framework is linked closely to the Common Inspection Framework. It provides WAES with a thorough process that makes good use of a range of information to evaluate all aspects of provision. Feedback from learners and partners is regularly sought and used to make improvements. Staff meet regularly with the learner council to gain feedback on the quality of the provision. Staff at all levels have a thorough understanding of how to use management data to monitor and improve course performance. Data is used well to set performance targets in sector subject areas.
19. Observation of teaching and learning is thorough and detailed. Assessment of teaching and learning is made against clear and extensive criteria. Teaching grades have improved. Inspectors' judgements about the quality of learning sessions closely matched those of WAES' observers. Inspectors identified good teaching and learning as a strength in most of the sector subject areas inspected and graded. Staff clearly understand the importance of accurate self-assessment

in bringing about improvement to the provision. Curriculum staff produce a sector subject area self-assessment report and a quality improvement plan that curriculum managers closely monitor. The senior curriculum manager regularly reviews this activity. Curriculum self-assessment reports and quality improvement plans are incorporated into WAES' overall self-assessment report and development plan. Good practice identified in the sector subject areas is routinely shared in most curriculum areas.

20. Equality of opportunity is good. Arrangements to widen participation by under-represented learners are good. WAES has well-established arrangements to comply with race, gender, disability and age legislation and effectively promotes equality of opportunity for individual learners in all aspects of its strategy, policy and practice. The service recognises that many learners are reluctant to attend city centre learning venues. WAES now provides learning activities at a range of centres in local communities, particularly in the most deprived areas. In extending this access to a range of learning opportunities, WAES is opening a series of satellite centres connected to seven key learning centres in the deprived areas. Learners speak highly of the opportunities they now have to attend learning centres in their locality. The service produces detailed and analytical diversity data to support self-assessment and quality improvement. The number of learners from traditionally under-represented groups has increased significantly over the last three years. In 2007/08, approximately 50% of learners lived in the nine wards that have the highest indices of deprivation in the city. The overall success rate of these learners has also increased each year for the last three years. All learners who require childcare receive a contribution towards the cost of fees to enable them to use the crèche facilities at the main centres and mobile facilities in the community venues.
21. WAES' range of employer links is narrow, as recognised in the self-assessment report. The service supports learners to develop personal, pre-employment and vocational skills. However, WAES provides learning programmes that contribute to the development of these skills with only a narrow range of employers, mainly in health and care and within the Council.
22. Safeguarding arrangements are incomplete. The procedures for safeguarding learners do not yet meet current government requirements. WAES shares the Council's policies and procedures for safeguarding, and has an arrangement with them for enhanced Criminal Records Bureau vetting for all additional learning support staff to be held on record. However, the service does not have access to this information apart from the dates to which the disclosures apply. Currently, not all tutors are vetted, but WAES has well-advanced plans to carry out this procedure. The service does not have a formally designated person with the responsibility and accountability to ensure that safeguarding arrangements are appropriate to the service. However, staff are aware of the informal arrangements that exist to deal with any safeguarding issues.

What learners like:

- The fact that courses give you the opportunity to raise your confidence, learn new skills and get qualifications
- Good access to higher education
- Meeting people and the social side to courses– ‘a great bunch’
- Dedicated and committed teachers who are helpful and supportive
- The easy availability of course information
- The good crèche facilities
- The ease with which we can move between different programmes
- The good support for programmes in the community
- The fact that classes help to provide Skills for Life/work
- The space and support to do what we want to do
- The broad range of places and times to study– affordable and accessible
- The flexible teaching
- The great learning environment

What learners think could improve:

- The long waiting lists on some courses
- The length of learning sessions- we'd like more time in class
- The planned closure of the learning centre in the community– keep it open
- ‘Retain fee concessions’
- The number of off-site extra curricular activities- we want more
- The quality of lessons that make use of information and learning technology

Sector subject areas

Health, public services and care

Satisfactory: Grade 3

Context

23. WAES offers a Train to Gain programme for 26 learners studying for a National Vocational Qualification (NVQ) in health and social care and 12 working towards an NVQ in supporting learning and teaching in schools. Sixteen learners are studying an NVQ at level 2 and 22 at level 3. Two learners belong to a minority ethnic group and two are male. None declared a disability at enrolment. Off-the-job training is provided at a half-day workshop that learners attend for 12 weeks. Learners have a designated assessor who plans and assesses their work in the workplace. All learners on the health and social care course are employed in work relating to the care of adults in residential settings, nursing homes or domiciliary care. Learners on the teaching assistants' programme are volunteers based in schools.

Strengths

- Good development of existing skills and acquisition of new skills.
- Good teaching and learning
- Particularly flexible approach to meeting employer and learner needs

Areas for improvement

- Insufficient initial assessment of literacy for health and social care learners
- Insufficient information, advice and guidance for health and social care learners
- Poor monitoring of learner records

Achievement and standards

24. Achievement and standards are satisfactory. The development of learners' existing skills and acquisition of new skills is good. Learners develop confidence and make good progress in completing their NVQ units. Experienced assessors support learners to develop existing skills. Learners demonstrate a good understanding of work and responsibilities in care practice and in supporting teaching and learning. Learners gain new skills and knowledge, such as on legislation on safeguarding, to support their practice in caring for older people and working in schools.

25. Success rates in 2007/08 were satisfactory at 65%. The proportion of learners who completed the programme within the planned period of study was also satisfactory at 63%. The standard of learners' work in portfolios is satisfactory.

Quality of provision

26. The quality of provision is satisfactory. Teaching and learning are good. Learners receive good training from vocationally qualified staff. Learners participate enthusiastically in well prepared and managed sessions. Tutors use effective teaching methods that sustain learners' interest and encourage participation. Learners enjoy small group work and value the opportunities to share good practice. Learners have access to a wide range of good quality resources. Teaching rooms are suitably equipped. The observation of teaching and learning scheme is good and promotes improvements in teaching and learning.
27. Assessment planning and practice are satisfactory. Planning is detailed and targets are clearly identified. Learners are well prepared for the frequent assessment visits. A wide range of methods is used to assess learners' skills in the workplace. Regular assessor and internal verifier meetings are held to promote consistent assessment practice. Reviews of learners' progress are satisfactory. The review paperwork clearly identifies learners' progress and refers to new skills gained. However, equal opportunities matters are not sufficiently covered and some action planning is insufficiently specific and measurable.
28. Initial assessment of literacy for health and social care learners is insufficient. Individual learning needs are not always identified. WAES does not make sufficient use of diagnostic tools to assess literacy needs early enough in the programme. Staff rely on learners to disclose their literacy needs. However, specialist literacy tutors provide support for learners where a need is identified. In 2007/08, 12 learners received specialist additional support for literacy and most made good progress towards achievement. The initial assessment process does not cover numeracy or ICT skills.
29. The extent to which programmes meet learners' needs and interests is good. WAES has a particularly flexible approach to meeting employer and learner needs. Assessors visit the workplace frequently to take account of learners' shift patterns. The service has a lone working policy to ensure that staff who work in isolation and during unsocial hours are safe. The choice of optional units is carefully matched to the needs of the learners and to employer requirements. Learners value the opportunity to achieve a nationally recognised qualification.
30. Induction is thorough, informative and ensures that learners have a full appreciation of the NVQ and of the commitment expected of them and their employer. Assessment practice, internal and external verification requirements and the appeals process are all thoroughly covered.
31. Support for learners is satisfactory. WAES staff support and communicate well with employers and learners. Assessors provide learners with individual support to overcome any personal difficulties that may hinder their progress towards completion of the NVQ.
32. Health and social care learners receive insufficient information, advice and guidance. They do not routinely receive career planning and guidance on further

training and promotion opportunities. Guidance on career advancement and training is currently not part of the off-the-job training programme. Assessors often provide advice on the range of jobs in the sector but insufficient time is devoted to exploring progression and career skills assessments, particularly in seeking further qualifications in literacy, numeracy and ICT.

Leadership and management

33. Leadership and management are satisfactory. Teamwork and communications are effective. Internal verification is satisfactory. Internal verifiers provide clear written feedback to assessors on the support learners receive, their progress and quality of the evidence in portfolios. Learners' understanding of equality and diversity is satisfactory. They receive guidance on bullying at work and on their rights and responsibilities. Employers' policies are vetted and a member of staff is responsible for liaison with employers on the Train to Gain programme. Learner questionnaires are produced in appropriate community languages.
34. The self-assessment process and report are satisfactory. Staff are consulted about the judgements in the report. However, the report is insufficiently evaluative. The strengths and areas for improvement were broadly similar to those that the inspectors identified.
35. The monitoring of learners' records is poor. Some records are unclear and others duplicate information in the application form, learner review and the individual learning plan. Audits are not regularly carried out. In some instances, information is unreliable or inaccurate. Some learner records do not record the safeguarding checks that the employer has carried out. Other records may include this information, but it is not verified as authentic. Learners' qualifications are not always checked. It is difficult for staff to monitor a learner's progress towards the NVQ by scrutinising the records. Additional support and its purpose is not always recorded.

Arts, media and publishing

Good: Grade 2

Context

36. At the time of inspection, 699 learners made 838 enrolments on arts, media and publishing courses. Classes are offered in 27 community centres, churches and day centres and include ceramics, art and design, hat making, jewellery, sculpture and woodcarving. Nine percent of the provision is accredited. Most courses are for two hours each week for 30 weeks during the day or evening. A few courses are taught in the summer. The curriculum manager and three coordinators run the department, which employs 20 tutors. Learning support is available at each centre. Seventy-four percent of learners are female and 21% are from a minority ethnic group. Forty percent are aged over 65, 36% declared a disability at enrolment and 11% have a learning difficulty and/or disability.

Strengths

- Outstanding success rates on Access to Higher Education programme
- Imaginative use of media in learners' work
- Good teaching and learning
- Wide range of innovative courses to meet learners' needs
- Good leadership and management

Areas for improvement

- Insufficiently thorough target-setting
- Insufficient identification and sharing of good practice

Achievement and standards

37. Achievement and standards are good overall. Success rates on the Access to Higher Education programme are outstanding at 100% in 2006/07 and 2007/08. The standard of learners' work is high. Current Access learners are making very good progress.

38. Learners make imaginative use of media in their work. In a mixed media class, learners embellished fabric memory books using transfer prints of photographs and personal items from their past. In a ceramics class for adults with learning disabilities and/or difficulties, learners cut out stencils to decorate slab-built mugs and learned the names of geometric shapes in doing so. In a hat-making class, learners designed and made traditional and contemporary felt hats to a professional standard. Learners value their work and many record their progress using digital photographs. A variety of exhibitions throughout the year provides opportunities to celebrate learners' work, showcase the art and crafts of professionals, and promote WAES courses. Progress into higher education from the Access course is good at 77%. Attendance and punctuality are satisfactory.

Quality of provision

39. The quality of provision is good, as recognised in the self-assessment report. Teaching and learning are also good. Lessons are well planned to include a variety of learning activities that effectively engage learners' interest. Many projects require learners to develop their own artistic responses. In Access classes, learners researched African ceramics to explore surface decoration for large, coiled portrait pots and experimented widely with colour monotype printing. This was concluded with a critical group evaluation session to develop ideas and awareness. Tutors know their learners well and differentiate appropriately. Tutors are knowledgeable and experienced. They provide accomplished demonstrations of their skills that learners value. Classroom displays are of a good standard and inspire learners. Individual tuition is encouraging and positive. However, the language used in feedback to learners is insufficiently evaluative. This is identified in the self-assessment report. A minority of less successful lessons are too teacher-centred and activities do not sufficiently challenge all learners. Some tutors do not plan question and answer sessions well to elicit deeper thinking and further engage learners.
40. Target-setting is insufficiently thorough. Individual targets are often unchallenging and vague. Progress against these targets cannot be clearly measured. WAES has identified this area for improvement through its observation of teaching and learning process. Experienced learners, who have been attending for a number of years, do not always make good progress and remain insufficiently challenged. Sketchbooks and daily diaries are used on the Access course but mainly to record skills and techniques rather than to encourage reflection and develop skills in critical evaluation. Sketchbooks are not widely used on other courses.
41. Programmes meet the needs and interests of learners well. WAES offers a wide range of innovative courses from beginners' level to courses for those seeking to pursue a career in the arts. An increasing number of courses are developed in partnership with the city museum and library service and the primary care trust. Art for health courses are planned with health care professionals. These are promoted widely and learners are often referred to a WAES class by their doctor. Last year, a 'survival skills for artists' course led to employment and paid commissions for some of the participants. WAES liaises well with local day centre staff to ensure that there is a good range of arts courses for learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. Learner feedback has been used well to redesign the learner induction booklet to make it more user-friendly.
42. Advice, guidance and support are satisfactory. A high level of support is provided for learners with additional learning needs. Information, advice and guidance effectively identify learner's needs. Tutors are aware of the support available and take steps to refer learners where necessary. Appropriate support is available to help those for whom English is a second language.

Leadership and management

43. Leadership and management are good. Strategic direction is clear. Strategies to widen participation and to encourage new learners are effective. Curriculum planning is good. Managers use data confidently to monitor performance. Productive partnerships and shared resources enable WAES to provide additional locations for teaching and learning and access to good quality exhibition venues. The Bilston Craft Gallery, for example, won a regional adult learners' group award last year for providing opportunities to stimulate and develop learners' interests in art and crafts. Communication with part-time staff is good. A monthly newsletter includes important reminders and department news, training opportunities and forthcoming exhibitions. Tutors' awareness of equal opportunities is good. Differentiation strategies are effectively used in lessons to meet the needs of all learners. Appropriate support arrangements are in place for learners with severe disabilities. Tutors promote cultural diversity in their teaching. observations are analysed, areas for improvement identified and training provided to improve practice. However, strengths in teaching and learning are not routinely identified in the same way or used to improve teaching. The observation of teaching and learning process is generally satisfactory, though a few lessons are overgraded.
44. Self-assessment was a thorough and inclusive process. Most of the key strengths and areas for improvement were correctly identified. Inspectors gave the same grade for provision as that in the self-assessment.

Classical and modern foreign languages

Good: Grade 2

Context

45. WAES provides 84 courses at 11 centres in modern foreign languages and British sign language. Seventy-two percent of courses are accredited. Courses are available in 11 languages, including community languages such as Hindi and Punjabi, as well as Chinese and Polish. Courses in French, Spanish and German are offered up to level 3, and British sign language (BSL) and Japanese up to Level 2. At the time of inspection, 699 learners were enrolled on 76 courses. Seventy percent of learners are female and 21% are from a minority ethnic group. In 2007/08, 821 learners enrolled onto courses in this area. Sessions are generally two hours long and run in the mornings, afternoons and evenings. Courses vary in length from 10 weeks to 32 weeks, with some shorter summer and taster courses. The curriculum manager for languages and a full time coordinator run the department, which employs 22 part-time tutors. Twenty tutors hold a relevant teaching qualification and 16 are native speakers of the languages they teach.

Strengths

- Outstanding success rates on accredited courses
- High achievement rates on non-accredited courses
- Good teaching and learning
- Broad range of languages to meet the needs of learners
- Good initiatives to support language learning
- Good use of data
- Good staff development

Areas for improvement

- Insufficient speaking practice for learners
- Insufficient setting and monitoring of individual objectives
- Slow response to improve the suitability of some teaching rooms

Achievement and standards

46. Achievement and standards are outstanding. Success rates on accredited courses are outstanding at 90% in 2006/07 and 95% in 2007/08. Achievement rates on non-accredited courses are high. In 2007/08, they were 93%. The provider assesses these courses internally against the course objectives in language proficiency at entry level. The standard of learners' spoken language is generally satisfactory for their course level but many retain distinct Anglophone pronunciation or lack fluency. The standard of learners' written work is generally good.

Quality of provision

47. The overall quality of provision is good. Teaching and learning are also good. Most tutors use the target language as the classroom language and to introduce new grammar structures or vocabulary. Lesson plans are detailed and include appropriate extension activities for more able learners. Most tutors accurately identify which learners may benefit from extension activities and which may require additional attention or are expected to attain only the minimum level learning outcomes. Most language training rooms are well equipped with good quality audiovisual and ICT equipment. Some have interactive whiteboards. The department makes good use of teacher-training students from the local university as teaching assistants to provide individual literacy support to learners.
48. Tutors provide insufficient speaking practice for learners. In a few classes, learners use too much English in talking to each other or when asking questions. In others, too much time is spent on reading and writing activities. In some classes, tutors' questions elicit whole class rather than individual answers and in others, there are insufficient pair or small group activities.
49. The setting and monitoring of individual objectives is insufficient. Tutors and learners do not sufficiently set, record and monitor personal goals or individual learning objectives in individual learning plans. The quality of learner reviews and target setting in the department is often poor. However, tutors do take close account of learners' priorities, recorded in their individual learning plans, within course objectives.
50. WAES provides a broad range of languages to meet the needs of learners. Learners can choose from a wide variety of European, South Asian and oriental languages in addition to BSL. Individual learners prepare for overseas travel or pursue foreign cultural interests. Some attend the courses for employment reasons. These include primary school teachers, health care workers and employers of migrant workers. Progression routes within the service and to other providers are clearly signposted.
51. Learners receive good support and guidance. Good initiatives support language learning. A successful weekly language support session helps learners develop their language study skills or receive additional coaching or more general learning support. In collaboration with the ESOL department, staff introduced an innovative weekly 'tandem' learning session for Polish learners studying ESOL and English students of Polish. These sessions provide the learners with good access to native speakers of their target language and additional opportunities to speak the language and learn more about Polish or British culture.
52. Arrangements for literacy, numeracy and language support are satisfactory. Tutors or teaching assistants provide informal support in class as required. Learners with higher level support needs are referred to the appropriate discrete provision.

Leadership and management

53. Leadership and management are good. The curriculum manager and her staff make good use of data to monitor performance in each language, at each level and by learner categories such as gender, ethnicity and age. They successfully set targets to further improve the overall provision. They have identified relative under-performance by black learners and introduced measures to improve it.
54. Staff development is good. Arrangements for observation of teaching and learning are effective. Observers provide comprehensive feedback to tutors, which includes elements particularly pertinent to language teaching. Action points from the observations, peer observations and tutor requests, effectively link with individual and departmental training plans. Mentors provide good support for new tutors. All tutors are able to benefit from collaborative planning sessions held each term, where they are able to receive further support and exchange good practice and ideas with other tutors.
55. The promotion of equality of opportunity is good. In addition to the integration of BSL into the department, the modern foreign languages department provided deaf awareness training for 102 WAES staff. The provision attracted an unusually high number of learners from minority ethnic backgrounds. The inclusion of community languages in the curriculum further extends cultural awareness.
56. The self-assessment process is inclusive and makes effective use of tutor and learner feedback. The judgements in the self-assessment report broadly match inspectors' findings, although the self-assessment grades are too generous.
57. Managers' response to improve the suitability of some teaching rooms has been slow. Some of the rooms in the well refurbished centres have poor acoustics, which exacerbate the challenge of learning a new language for hearing impaired learners. The provider has not yet installed suitable soundproofing or other measures to improve the acoustics. Although information learning technology and audiovisual equipment are of good quality and generally available on request, it is not provided in all cases. The quality of some teaching and learning sessions is adversely affected.

Preparation for life and work

Satisfactory: Grade 3

Context

58. WAES provides preparation for life and work programmes for 744 learners at 23 sites. In 2007/08, 1,408 learners enrolled on ESOL, literacy, numeracy and family learning courses. Twenty-two percent were male, 50% from a minority ethnic group and 22.5% had learning difficulties and/or disabilities. Courses are offered during the day and evening over two 18-week terms. Some ESOL and pre-entry literacy and numeracy classes are taught over 10 weeks. Most learners work towards Skills for Life qualifications. Two curriculum managers and five curriculum coordinators manage the programmes.

Strengths

- Very motivated and engaged learners
- Thorough initial assessment
- Good teaching and learning in literacy and numeracy
- Wide range of courses to meet the needs of learners

Areas for improvement

- Insufficient focus on learning in ESOL classes
- Insufficient use of information and learning technology
- Insufficiently thorough quality improvement arrangements in ESOL

Achievement and standards

59. Achievement and standards are satisfactory. Learners are very motivated and engaged. They are very keen and interested in improving their language, literacy and numeracy skills and develop much confidence from attending the classes. Many literacy learners make good progress from entry level to level 2 within a year. Learners are keen to progress onto a GCSE course or to another level 2 programme.

60. The standard of learners' work is satisfactory. Learners produce interesting group writing plans in the form of 'spidergrams' or bullet points before producing their own texts. Learners effectively practice and make note of possible answers in the speaking exam. In numeracy classes, learners carefully record the results of each measuring task and subsequent calculations in their notebooks. Overall success rates are satisfactory and improving. In 2006/07, the success rate was 68% and in 2007/08 it was 73%. Overall attendance is satisfactory.

Quality of provision

61. The quality of provision is satisfactory. Teaching and learning are also satisfactory. Initial assessment is thorough. Learners are placed in classes that

are appropriate to their ability. Individual learning plans contain comprehensive information about the learners and their goals. Strengths and areas for development are recorded in detail. However, in ESOL, these plans do not always relate to the learner's employment goals and do not sufficiently record the language skills the learner needs to improve.

62. Teaching and learning in literacy and numeracy are good. Lessons are well-planned with good attention to differentiation. In numeracy classes, learners carry out calculations for perimeter and area using practical measuring activities of everyday objects and the classroom. They are continuously challenged and develop a very good understanding of mathematical concepts. Tutors and learners in literacy classes make good use of a wide range of colourful and well presented learning resources such as video recordings of topical news items to develop reading and writing skills. Learners make good use of a wide range of dictionaries in class.
63. The review of progress and achievement is good for literacy and numeracy learners. Learners receive regular reviews and are well prepared for the external tests. They accurately record their learning in a learner diary at the end of each session. Tutors provide them with immediate and personal feedback. ESOL learners also complete learner diaries, but these do not always reflect progress towards targets.
64. ESOL classes are characterised by an insufficient focus on learning, a narrow range of learning activities and unimaginative learning materials. Learners are not sufficiently encouraged to practice speaking skills. They often work in the same pairs for the whole lesson. Some activities last too long. Tutors do not always correct learners' work.
65. The use of information learning technology (ILT) is insufficient. Few classes are equipped with computers. Even where they are, tutors do not make sufficient use of them to support learning. Learners have few opportunities to develop computer skills to improve their writing, research or discussion skills. E-learning resources and materials for use by ESOL tutors have been developed recently, but few of these are interactive. Little guidance on existing online or published materials is available for tutors.
66. Programmes effectively meet learners' needs and interests. WAES offers a wide range of courses and programmes to meet the needs of learners. The curriculum area was recently restructured to respond to learner demand and to help learners gain accreditation and progression to the next level within a year. Courses in family learning effectively develop the skills of learners to support their children with school work. These classes encourage adults to attend literacy or numeracy classes to improve their own skills and increase job opportunities or prospects. ESOL learners completing entry level 3 courses are effectively guided to attend the ESOL for Work course.

67. Guidance and support are satisfactory. Some learners use the information, advice and guidance at the service's main site in the city centre, but many are not aware of this service. Tutors are approachable and supportive.

Leadership and management

68. Leadership and management are satisfactory. Internal communication is good. ESOL staff meet regularly to share best practice. Staff training and development are generally satisfactory. Close links with local teacher-training providers support many tutors to attend courses to gain the new initial teaching qualifications. A useful peer observation programme is in place for ESOL, but this has yet to be developed in literacy and numeracy. ESOL tutors have not received sufficient support to help them develop and use e-learning materials and ILT in the classroom, or how to provide integrated additional learning support

69. Equality of opportunity arrangements are satisfactory overall. ESOL staff made good use of their contacts with other Council departments and the local Polish community to develop an innovative European-funded project. Local people have the opportunity to acquire English language teaching skills, and develop a better understanding of the language and culture of host countries, while living and working in Poland or Hungary. Many of the beneficiaries from this programme have subsequently progressed into part time employment with WAES as tutors.

70. Self-assessment is an inclusive process. Most of the judgements in the self-assessment report are accurate, particularly those relating to literacy and numeracy provision. However, the service failed to identify two significant areas for improvement in ESOL. Inspectors gave a lower grade for the provision overall than that in the self-assessment.

71. Quality improvement arrangements in ESOL are insufficiently thorough. Appropriate quality assurance processes are in place and staff regularly audit course files. However, though staff often correctly identify areas for improvement, they do not always carry out actions for improvement. Observations of teaching and learning have taken place for established tutors, but the large number of recently appointed ESOL tutors have yet to be observed. Grades given following learning observations are generally accurate, but there is insufficient action to improve the overall quality of ESOL teaching and learning.

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	739	76.6%	70.5%	6.1
	07/08*	689	76%	N/A	
2 long	06/07	331	78.9%	69.0%	9.8
	07/08*	320	75%	N/A	
Short**	06/07	1121	69.6%	82.9%	-13.3
	07/08*	1159	77%	N/A	

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

** Courses over 5 weeks long