

# Oldham Lifelong Learning Service

**Inspection date** 

5 June 2009

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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 (<a href="www.ofsted.gov.uk">www.ofsted.gov.uk</a>), reports from the inspectorates' quality monitoring or annual assessment 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:

- Preparation for life and work
- Family learning

The inspection did not separately inspect and report on the quality of provision in health, public services and care; agriculture, horticulture and animal care; construction, planning and the built environment; information and communication technology (ICT); retail and commercial enterprise; leisure, travel and tourism; arts, media and publishing; social sciences; languages, literature and culture, and education and training.

### Description of the provider

- 1. Oldham Lifelong Learning Service (OLLS) is part of Oldham Metropolitan Borough Council's (the council) People, Communities and Society directorate.
- 2. OLLS contracts with the Greater Manchester LSC to provide programmes in further education and personal and community development learning (PCDL). OLLS uses around 65 venues including eight lifelong learning centres, schools, children's centres, libraries and other community premises.
- 3. In 2007/08, OLLS enrolled 6,236 learners, of whom 30.5% were on further education courses and 69.5% on non-accredited provision and First Step programmes. Of these learners, 59% claimed a fee concession, 64% were on further education courses and 63% in adult and community learning. Approximately 26% of learners were from minority ethnic backgrounds.
- 4. OLLS has 2,459 learners. Of these, 154 learners are in health, care and public services; 337 in ICT; 115 in retail and commercial enterprise; 212 in leisure, travel and tourism; 275 in arts, media and publishing; 260 in languages, literature and culture, 993 in preparation for life and work, 102 in family learning and 11 in community development provision.
- 5. The head of the service, supported by six co-ordinators; eight curriculum managers; 14 programme leaders and six operational managers, manages OLLS. It employs 132 full-and part-time tutors.
- 6. In 2007, Oldham was the 42nd most deprived of the local authority areas in England and the 23rd most deprived in terms of local concentration of deprivation. In 2007, the three central wards of Coldhurst, St Mary's and Werneth were in the bottom 1% of the national tables for deprivation. In Oldham, around 9.8% of the population aged 20 and over were from minority ethnic backgrounds compared with the national average of 9.1%. The local unemployment rate was 8.1% in January 2009 compared with the national rate of 5.5%.

# Summary of grades awarded

Effectiveness of provision	Outstanding: Grade 1
Adult and community learning	Contributory grade: Outstanding: Grade 1
Capacity to improve	Outstanding: Grade 1
Achievement and standards	Outstanding: Grade 1
Adult and community learning	Contributory grade: Outstanding: Grade 1
Quality of provision	Outstanding: Grade 1
Adult and community learning	Contributory grade: Outstanding: Grade 1
Leadership and management	Outstanding: Grade 1
Adult and community learning	Contributory grade: Outstanding: Grade 1
<b>Equality of opportunity</b>	Contributory grade: Outstanding: Grade 1

# **Sector subject areas**

Preparation for life and work	Outstanding: Grade 1
Family learning	Outstanding: Grade 1

# Overall judgement

### **Effectiveness of provision**

**Outstanding: Grade 1** 

Adult and community learning

7. The overall effectiveness of the provision is outstanding. Achievement and standards are outstanding. Success rates on accredited and non-accredited provision are high. On family

Contributory grade: Outstanding: Grade 1

- outstanding. Success rates on accredited and non-accredited provision are high. On family learning and literacy, numeracy and English for speakers of other languages (ESOL) programmes, learners' achievements are outstanding. Learners develop a good range of employability skills and self-esteem, with a significant number progressing to other courses.
- 8. The quality of provision is outstanding. Teaching and learning are outstanding. Tutors plan learning sessions very well for individual learners. The arrangements for recognising and recording progress and achievement (RARPA) in non-accredited learning are very thorough and reliable. Tutors provide constructive and detailed feedback on learners' progress and how to improve. The extent to which programmes meet learners' needs and interests is good. Guidance and support are outstanding. Pre-course information and guidance are particularly effective in placing the learners on appropriate programmes. Support arrangements for learners are very effective. Learners from minority ethnic groups and learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities achieve as well as others.
- 9. Leadership and management are outstanding. Curriculum management in literacy, numeracy and ESOL, and family learning programmes is outstanding. Strategic planning is very effective in meeting the community, local and national priorities. Partnership working is particularly effective in widening participation and enhancing social cohesion. Equality of opportunity is outstanding. Safeguarding arrangements meet current government requirements.

### **Capacity to improve**

#### **Outstanding: Grade 1**

- 10. OLLS has an outstanding capacity to improve. Quality assurance processes are outstanding. OLLS has taken a number of very effective actions to improve the quality of provision since the previous inspection in 2005. Quality arrangements are particularly effective in identifying areas for improvement and developing sustained improvements. Success rates on accredited provision at all levels have improved consistently, to significantly above national averages. OLLS has a strong focus on improving the quality of its provision through observations of teaching and learning, in addition to observations of learners' support sessions. The quality of provision in preparation for life and work and family learning has improved and is outstanding. Leadership and management and equality of opportunity arrangements, which were good at the previous inspection, have also improved and are now outstanding.
- 11. The self-assessment process is outstanding. It is very inclusive and very effectively engages other providers and partner organisations including the LSC. Tutors, learners and managers take their contribution to the self-assessment process very seriously and offer informed views about the quality of provision. The report is very comprehensive, critical and evaluative and uses an extensive range of data to compare its performance with other local and regional providers as well as national averages. OLLS underestimated the

quality of most aspects of its provision, for example in preparation for life and work, leadership and management and equality of opportunity. A detailed development plan supports the self-assessment report and identifies priorities for improvement. Progress in implementing the development plan is very effective.

# Key strengths

- Outstanding achievement and standards
- High success rates for accredited and non-accredited provision
- Outstanding teaching and learning
- Very good strategic mission and vision
- Outstanding curriculum management
- Outstanding approach to equality and diversity

# Key areas for improvement

■ No significant areas for improvement

# Main findings

### **Achievement and standards**

**Outstanding: Grade 1** 

Adult and community learning

- Contributory grade: Outstanding: Grade 1
- 12. Achievement and standards are outstanding, as identified in the self-assessment report. Achievement rates in preparation for life and work and family learning are outstanding.
- 13. Learners' success rates on further education courses are high and have improved consistently since the previous inspection. In 2006/07, success rates for level 1 and level 2 courses were above national averages by 9.4% and 13.9% respectively. In 2007/08, success rates were high at 84.6% for level 1 courses and 86.7% for level 2.
- 14. Success rates for learners in ICT, which is the second largest sector subject area after preparation for life and work, are outstanding. Learners make excellent progress, especially as 66% claim a fee concession, 29% are from the top five most deprived communities and 53.3% are from the top 10 most deprived communities. Success rates of these learners have been consistently high at level 1 and level 2 since 2006/07. In 2006/07, success rates for ICT learners at level 1 were high at 83.8%, 25% above national averages and outstanding at level 2 at 97.7%, 42% above national averages.
- 15. Success rates for level 2 learners in languages, literature and culture were at 78.6% in 2006/07, 8.5% above national averages, and high at 82.4% in 2007/08. In education and training, success rates on level 2 courses in 2006/07 and 2007/08 were outstanding at 89% and 91.8% respectively. In 2007/08, success rates for level 3 courses in education and training were outstanding at 95.2%, 24.6% above national averages.
- 16. Success rates in non-accredited provision are high. Learners develop good self-esteem and a range of practical, personal and employability skills. Learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are achieving at least as well as others. Success rates for learners from minority ethnic groups are generally higher than for other groups.

### **Quality of provision**

**Outstanding: Grade 1** 

Adult and community learning

Contributory grade: Outstanding: Grade 1

17. The quality of provision is outstanding. This was underestimated in the self-assessment report. Teaching and learning are outstanding. Tutors often have detailed negotiations with learners to plan their learning. The best sessions are challenging with a range of interesting activities that include very good discussions and peer learning. This inspires and motivates learners. RARPA arrangements are outstanding for most learners in non-accredited learning. Learning targets are specific and measurable and tutors use them effectively to plan individuals' progress. Tutors are very enthusiastic and committed to supporting learners' progress. In French learning sessions, tutors monitor and assess learners' progress very effectively. In these sessions, tutors offer detailed and constructive feedback, often in the target language. This significantly contributes to learners' development. In many subjects, tutors set homework that is returned promptly with very detailed feedback on how to improve further.

- 18. The extent to which programmes meet learners' needs is good. OLLS offers its provision in venues in deprived communities, with around 64% of its learners from these communities. OLLS uses detailed information about local needs to develop provision which engages learners. Enrichment activities that complement learning are regularly planned. These include visits to theatres, libraries, museums and galleries, other cities and the countryside. OLLS meets employers' needs appropriately.
- 19. Guidance and support arrangements are outstanding. Learners significantly benefit from a wide range of excellent pre-course activities and information to help them to make informed choices about the course and the level which is most appropriate to their needs and interests. These include taster sessions, individual interviews and pre-course skills checks. Excellent on-course support enables learners to achieve and to progress to other courses. Free crèche provision is available in four lifelong learning centres.

### Leadership and management

**Outstanding: Grade 1** 

Adult and community learning **Equality of opportunity** 

Contributory grade: Outstanding: Grade 1 Contributory grade: Outstanding: Grade 1

- 20. Leadership and management are outstanding. This was underestimated in the self-assessment report. OLLS maintains a very strong focus on achieving its strategic priorities. Strategic and operational plans are very clear and detailed. Strong partnership working with other providers and stakeholders has resulted in a comprehensive curriculum offer. OLLS plays an active leading role in local learning to ensure coverage and reduce duplication.
- 21. Operational management is outstanding. The management of preparation for life and work and family learning is outstanding. OLLS has taken extremely effective actions to improve the provision since the previous inspection. It has stopped offering aspects of the provision that can be better offered by other providers. The management information system provides accurate and detailed information which is used well for planning and monitoring the provision. However, managers do not routinely record the progress towards headline targets for retention, achievement and success rates at performance review meetings.
- 22. Quality arrangements are very effective in monitoring and improving the quality of all aspects of the learners' experience. Particularly effective arrangements are in place to improve teaching and learning. Observation of teaching and learning includes monitoring the quality of training and support offered by tutors, support workers, crèche workers and initial guidance staff. The information from this process is used well to plan for staff development, training activities, peer support and sharing good practice. Arrangements to monitor non-accredited programmes are as thorough as those used for accredited provision.
- 23. The self-assessment process is outstanding. All staff and many learners contribute and take ownership of the report. The report is thorough, objective and uses evidence well. The quality improvement plan is detailed and is an accurate reflection of the issues identified in the self-assessment report. The system to moderate the self-assessment process is thorough and well established.

- 24. The service's approach to equality and diversity is outstanding. It fully complies with race, gender and disability legislation and monitors the effect of its policies and procedures well. Staff training on equality and diversity is comprehensive and all staff attend annually. Since the previous inspection, OLLS has developed the provision to focus more on specific target populations within the area. OLLS uses data very well to ensure that barriers to participation and achievement are removed effectively. Participation rates of learners from minority ethnic groups are high at 31%, 20% above the local profile. The number of women enrolled was higher than men by around 50% in 2007/08. However, the service has a diverse range of courses and activities that are increasing the number of men. Support for learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is outstanding with their retention rates and achievement rates generally higher than other groups. In 2005, OLLS received regional recognition for its work with learners with mental health difficulties through the Positive Achievement and Communication into Education project.
- 25. OLLS has a particularly strong focus to promote equality, diversity, and multicultural values, and to overcome racism. In 2008, OLLS with its partners won the North West Employers Equality award for the No Place for Racism in Oldham project. Tutors plan group work in learning sessions and schemes of work to promote respect for diverse cultures. For example, a distance learning project for the month of Ramadan very effectively met the needs of female learners. Learners from different social and cultural backgrounds participate actively, including those with barriers to learning. This significantly promotes social cohesion. Equality of opportunity and the celebration of diversity throughout all aspects of the provision are very effective in enhancing social cohesion in the Oldham area. Those learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are included particularly well in all sessions.
- 26. Procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements. OLLS follows the policy and procedures set out by the council's safeguarding board which meet government requirements. The policy has clear arrangements for carrying out Criminal Records Bureau checks for tutors, and risk assessments are in place for new tutors while checks are carried out. All relevant staff receive safeguarding training. During induction, learners are informed who to contact if they have safeguarding concerns.

# What learners like:

- 'It gives me hope that I can use my skills elsewhere'
- 'I am able to function better in my community'
- 'Tutors use a wide range of teaching methods which helps me learn'
- 'I am confident to work again'
- 'Tutors use good examples about English life'

# What learners think could improve:

■ The range of provision – learners want more level 3 courses

## Sector subject areas

### Preparation for life and work

**Outstanding: Grade 1** 

### Context

27. In 2008/09 to date, OLLS has enrolled 1,665 learners on literacy, numeracy and ESOL courses. Of these, 379 are PCDL learners, 371 literacy learners, 403 numeracy learners and 461 ESOL learners. In addition, 51 learners are on literacy and numeracy combined programmes. Currently 993 learners are on programmes with 84% of courses at entry level, 12% at level 1 and 4% at level 2. These courses run over a three-day period each week or one session each week at various times during the day and in the evenings. All learners work to achieve the learning goals agreed with them at the start of their programme and are also working towards nationally recognised qualifications.

### **Strengths**

- Outstanding retention and achievement
- Very good skills development
- Excellent teaching and learning
- Good range of courses to promote community cohesion
- Outstanding advice and guidance
- Outstanding management of provision

### **Areas for improvement**

■ No significant areas for improvement

#### **Achievement and standards**

28. Achievement and standards are outstanding. This was underestimated in the self-assessment report. In 2008/09, retention rates are outstanding at 92.7% on literacy, 91.4% on numeracy and 91.6% on ESOL courses. In 2008/09, achievement rates are outstanding at 99.5% for literacy at entry level, 94.2% at level 1 and 94.4% at level 2. Numeracy achievement rates are also outstanding at 90.3% at entry level, 91.9% at level 1 and 91.8% at level 2. On ESOL courses, achievement rates are outstanding for entry level at 99.1%, and 100% at level 1. Learners develop a very good range of skills and self-esteem including a good understanding of language and mathematical concepts. Learners actively use these skills to enable them to find work and to help their children. Attendance is good. All learner groups achieve as well as each other.

### **Quality of provision**

29. The quality of the provision is outstanding. This was underestimated in the self-assessment report. Teaching and learning are outstanding. Tutors plan sessions very well, using learners' individual learning goals in addition to the course criteria, on literacy, numeracy and ESOL courses. Tutors plan learning sessions very effectively to include interesting and challenging tasks that enable learners to enjoy their learning and demonstrate new skills. Tutors use the RARPA process particularly well to monitor progress, negotiate new learning targets and promote independent learning. Learners work at a pace that enables them to develop new skills to good standards. Tutors set more

experienced learners more challenging tasks so that they remain motivated. Tutors use a wide range of teaching methods for learners to understand and apply mathematical and language skills in their lives. Tutors are particularly effective in helping learners to understand concepts which learners' find difficult, such as fractions and long division. They provide good explanations and encourage learners to share experiences and new ways of using their gained knowledge which significantly motivates learners. Tutors take particular care in marking learners' work with very constructive feedback and suggested areas for development.

- 30. The extent to which programmes and activities meet learners' needs is good. The range of venues and courses offered is very effective in widening participation and community cohesion. OLLS offers courses at venues which encourage different communities to attend and share experiences through learning together. Very often, learners from different minority ethnic backgrounds continue their friendships after the end of the course.
- 31. Guidance and support for learners are outstanding. Learners receive very effective advice and guidance on enrolment and through the courses from highly experienced and qualified staff. This approach has been significantly effective in ensuring learners join appropriate courses and achieve well. Tutors give outstanding support to learners to overcome their barriers and perceptions about learning. They identify the need for additional learning support at interview and good quality support is provided promptly. Learners routinely advise each other through excellent peer support arrangements. A good range of specialist equipment is used as appropriate. For example, large keyboards are available for learners with mobility or visual difficulties.

### Leadership and management

- 32. Leadership and management are outstanding. This aspect was underestimated in the self-assessment report. Actions taken to improve the provision since the previous inspection have been outstanding. OLLS has a strong focus on improvement and encouraging high standards and expectations through all it does. Observations of teaching and learning are very reliable and accurate. Tutors are highly qualified and experienced. A wide range of strong community partnerships facilitates the development of the programme over a large geographical area. Data is analysed and used particularly well by managers and the results are routinely shared with the tutors to enable them to monitor the provision. Team working is very good between specialist tutors who work across sector subject areas to ensure that support for learners' literacy, numeracy and language needs is planned and delivered well. Tutors use professional development opportunities well to improve their teaching practices and support learners. The Skills for Life strategy is comprehensive and is progressing well towards full implementation across all areas of the service.
- 33. Tutors and learners contribute well to the self-assessment process through in-depth discussions and the course evaluation process. The process has enabled significant development and improvement of the provision. The use of data in the self-assessment report is particularly strong.
- 34. OLLS is very successful in promoting equality and diversity. Those learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are fully included within all learning sessions. Many learning activities promote cultural awareness very effectively. OLLS has developed a wide range of good quality multicultural resources which are shared with teaching staff across all sector subject areas.

### Family learning

**Outstanding: Grade 1** 

#### Context

35. Currently 229 learners are enrolled on 27 courses. To date in 2008/09, OLLS has 1,238 enrolments that include 463 learners on 49 courses in family language, literacy and numeracy (FLLN) and 298 learners on 29 wider family learning courses. A further 250 learners are enrolled on courses provided under the Family Learning Impact funding arrangements. These include courses for parents to support their children in developing skills in language, literacy and numeracy. Wider family learning includes a range of courses including computer skills for families. To date in 2008/09, 12% of all learners are men and around 60% of learners do not have English as a first language. Two programme leaders, three project leaders and 10 part-time tutors, support the full-time manager. The team delivers family learning courses at venues including schools, children's centres, community centres and libraries in areas of high deprivation.

### **Strengths**

- Excellent achievement of skills and development of confidence
- Outstanding teaching and learning
- Very good range of provision
- Excellent support for learners
- Outstanding management
- Very thorough system to assure and improve quality

### Areas for improvement

■ No significant areas for improvement

#### **Achievement and standards**

36. Achievement and standards are outstanding, as identified in the self-assessment report. Learners develop excellent personal, social and interpersonal skills and confidence. Many learners have very little previous positive experience of learning or have no experience of learning in the United Kingdom. These learners gain confidence and skills to effectively improve many aspects of their lives, their families' lives and to support their children in their study. Schools report outstanding improvements in their working relationships with the learners' who are parents or carers. They report parents valuing education for their children more strongly, much improved school attendance and attainment of the learners' children as well as significant improvements in community cohesion. Achievement of the negotiated learning goals between the tutors and learners is outstanding at 99%. Many learners progress further and take national certificates. In 2007/08, 95% of 129 learners who entered for national certificates in literacy and numeracy were successful and 35% of learners on short family learning courses gained Skills for Life qualifications. Since 2007/08, learners' retention rates have been consistently outstanding at above 97%. A significant number of learners on family learning courses progress to other courses. The standard of learners' work is very good and all learner groups achieve as well as each other.

### **Quality of provision**

- 37. The quality of provision is outstanding, as identified in the self-assessment report. Teaching and learning are outstanding. Teaching sessions are planned very well, and inspirational. Tutors effectively encourage learners to participate in the planning of their learning, learning activities and to contribute to the learning of their peers. In one course, learners successfully negotiated their own learning objectives which included discussing the progress of their children with school staff. Tutors use the RARPA process very thoroughly to monitor learners' progress and update learners' individual learning plans. Learners make very good use of information technology and other learning resources, which are developed well to encourage discussion and learning. In one course about participation in communities, learners were inspired by a simulated street scene to create their own role play and explore effective ways of promoting children's road safety.
- 38. The extent to which programmes meet learners' needs and interests is good. Collaborative working with children's centres, schools and community partners is very effective in providing courses for the target groups and to engage them in learning. Several schools comment on the value of family learning in supporting community cohesion, including bringing together members of different communities in learning activities and learner forums. OLLS also develops courses which effectively engage men and grandparents. It provides frequent activities to extend learners' achievement and enjoyment, such as visits to outdoor education centres and drama projects.
- 39. Guidance and support are outstanding. Arrangements for advice and guidance are particularly effective in supporting learners to choose the courses which best meet their goals. An extended network of partners including schools, communities and children's centres provide very good advice, especially to hard to reach learners. OLLS provides very effective support for learners in their own language, with outstanding additional support for learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. In one course, learners used large lettering on individual whiteboards so that a learner with language and visual difficulties could follow the group activities.

### **Leadership and management**

- 40. Leadership and management are outstanding. Curriculum management is outstanding. Managers have a very clear strategic vision for family learning and its role in Oldham. Strong partnerships with schools, communities and children's centres enable very effective planning and monitoring of provision at all levels. Learners are very aware of the service's policies, and are consulted very effectively at all stages. OLLS has a strong focus on equality and diversity and in contributing to the five outcomes of *Every Child Matters*. Tutors, school teachers, support staff and crèche workers use the allocated time within each teaching session well to jointly review, improve and plan learning and teaching activities. Very effective and innovative partnership working increases participation in priority neighbourhoods and by hard-to-reach learners. Team working in the family learning team is particularly strong, with regular staff meetings between managers and tutors. Staff are suitably qualified and all FLLN tutors have, or are working towards, level 5 literacy and/or numeracy subject specialist qualifications.
- 41. Quality assurance and improvement processes are comprehensive and very effective. The observation of teaching and learning process is developmental and thorough with an effective moderation process. Improvement plans are detailed and comprehensive, and include very effective support for tutors, extensive staff training, team-teaching and mentoring. Evaluations of courses by tutors and learners are used well to improve the

quality of provision, for example, in extending the process of learners' inductions, to improve guidance and planning.

- 42. Arrangements for equality of opportunity are outstanding. OLLS has been significantly effective in widening participation, community cohesion and promoting dialogue between different communities. All teaching venues, including the schools, are in disadvantaged areas. Those learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are included particularly well with other learners in all learning sessions. Tutors strongly encourage learners from different cultures, social backgrounds and disabilities to work and support each other. Tutors challenge stereotypical comments made by learners effectively.
- 43. The self-assessment process is inclusive and includes tutors', learners', stakeholders' and partners' views. The self-assessment report uses data very well to assess the quality of the provision and is an outstanding tool for further improvement.

# Learners' achievements

Success rates on accredited entry and level 1 (combined), level 2 and level 3 qualifications, by length, expected end year and age.

2006 to 2008, compared with national rates for general further education colleges.

	19+					
Notional Level	Exp End Year	Starts	Provider Rate %	National Rate %	Difference%	
1 Long	2006/07	1433	80	70	+10	
	2007/08	1269*	84	-		
2 Long	2006/07	487	83	69	+14	
	2007/08	541*	87	-		
Short**	2006/07	825	82	83	-1	
	2007/08	822*	90	-		

Annex

- \* ACL provider data not validated
- \*\* Courses over five weeks long

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