

# East Sussex County Council

## Inspection report

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Unique reference number: 50120

Name of lead inspector: Richard Beynon HMI

Last day of inspection: 10 June 2010

Type of provider: Local Authority

Address: Floor 2  
St Mark's House  
14 Upperton Road  
Eastbourne  
BN21 1EP

Telephone number: 0132 3463366

## Information about the provider

1. East Sussex County Council (ESCC) adult and community learning was formerly located in the strategic economic development and skills team, within the chief executive's department of the council until October 2007. It was responsible for the strategic leadership and management of adult learning across East Sussex and direct delivery of family learning (FL) and family literacy, language and numeracy (FLLN) provision. In November 2007, the council withdrew from delivery of all areas of adult and community learning, except family learning, which moved into children's services within the council, to afford closer integration with extended schools and children's centres. Provision is funded by the Skills Funding Agency.
2. ESCC now discharges its responsibilities for WFL, FLNN and family learning impact funding (FLIF) programmes by commissioning partners to deliver on their behalf while retaining responsibility for strategy and quality improvement. Their provider partners use a variety of venues such as schools, children's centres and other non-school venues such as community centres. The provider network for 2009/10 includes voluntary sector organisations, children's centres, primary and secondary schools and private training providers, which deliver courses and employ mainly sessional tutors. Of the 56 learners enrolled at the time of the inspection 33 were on FLLN programmes, five on WFL programmes and 18 on FLIF programmes.
3. East Sussex has a population of just over half a million and covers an area of 1725 square kilometres. It is a varied county, predominantly rural, but with most of the population living in urban areas, particularly the coastal towns. Both affluence and deprivation are common and often found in close proximity.
4. East Sussex is the seventh most deprived county in England, excluding unitary authorities, and it has the highest levels of deprivation of any county in the south east. The 2006 annual population survey shows that 9.8% of working-age adults have no qualifications, higher than the proportions in Sussex overall, the South East and England. Of the adult population, 83.4% are qualified to Level 1 or above, which is slightly above the proportion for the south-east region, while 48% are qualified to Level 3 or above, which is below the proportion for the region.
5. The council does not provide training on behalf of other providers.
6. The following organisations provides training on behalf of the provider:
  - Excellence Cluster
  - Crossland and Dudson Training
  - Bexhill and Rother Children's Centres

- Lewes Area Children's Centres
- Newhaven Community Development Association
- Pestalozzi International School (Hastings)
- Eastbourne Technology College
- Willingdon Community School
- Bexhill High School
- Ringmer Community College
- Rye College
- Parkland Infants School
- Shinewater Primary School
- Marshlands Primary School
- Torfield Special School
- Hampden Park Infants School.

Type of provision	Number of enrolled learners in 2008/09
Informal adult learning	960

## Summary report

Grades: 1 is outstanding; 2 is good; 3 is satisfactory; 4 is inadequate

Overall effectiveness of provision	Grade 2
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Capacity to improve	Grade 3
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	Grade
Outcomes for learners	2
Quality of provision	2
Leadership and management	2
Safeguarding	3
Equality and diversity	3

Subject Areas	Grade
Family learning	2

## Overall effectiveness

7. The overall effectiveness of provision is good. Learners develop good levels of confidence, improve their personal and social skills and clearly enjoy their learning. Outcomes in national tests are satisfactory overall. Healthy living courses enable learners to consider their own health and that of their families. Children's performance at, and engagement with, schools has improved. Retention is outstanding across the provision and attendance is very good. The majority of lessons are well paced and stimulating and meet learners' needs. In some classes, there is insufficient initial assessment of learners' starting points and insufficient monitoring of progress. Some tutors do not have qualifications or skills to support learners' literacy and numeracy needs. ESCC ensures that courses exist in areas of greatest need, and it engages in outstanding partnership work with a broad range of local providers. Learners receive good support on courses and they are given informal advice about further courses. However, insufficient formal advice and guidance is currently built into courses. Courses are well managed, and managers are highly supportive of provider partners. Safeguarding and measures to provide for equality of opportunity are satisfactory. Arrangements to assure the quality of provision are adequate. Managers are working towards more precise targets for providers in revised service level agreements.

## Main findings

- Learners develop good personal and social skills, and enjoy their learning. Courses help learners to develop confidence, knowledge and skills across a well-planned series of small and varied stages.
- Retention has been outstanding on all courses during the past three years. Learners also attend well. If learners do miss classes, staff quickly contact them and encourage them to attend.
- Learners are gaining a good understanding of the ways their children study and learn. Headteachers are very positive about benefits to schools brought about by parents' engagement with courses. Many parents are better able to care for their children's health after following healthy living courses.
- Success rates for national tests in literacy and numeracy are satisfactory. However, insufficient numbers of learners are currently able to take national tests. Too few teachers have the skills or qualifications necessary to support learners' literacy and numeracy needs.
- Most classes are well paced and stimulating, and teaching and learning are good overall. In a small number of classes, learners receive insufficient personalised support for literacy and numeracy needs.
- Measures to assess learners' starting points are insufficient. Too many learners receive no formal initial assessment, particularly of their literacy and numeracy skills and needs. Measurement of progress made against starting points is also insufficiently formalised, and some individual learning plans lack clear and effective targets.
- ESCC manages provision well to meet the needs of a diverse range of learner groups. Managers make good use of the specialist and local knowledge of provider partners to inform decisions about the placing of courses. Partnership working is outstanding, and provider partners receive very good support from service managers. The family learning forum is well attended by providers' staff and used profitably to share their experience and good practice.
- Learners receive good support from teachers in class. An adequate range of informal advice and guidance is provided for learners, but there is insufficient formal advice about further learning or employment from specialist agencies. The provider has recognised this area for improvement and plans are in place to provide more formal input.
- Provision is managed well, with good communications. Managers take effective steps to gather, analyse and act upon the views of learners and partners. However, arrangements for commissioning provision lack sufficiently formalised service level agreements. Present agreements lack precise and demanding targets for performance.
- Measures to ensure equality of opportunity and to promote diversity are satisfactory. Staff and learners have a sound understanding of their rights and responsibilities. Policies and procedures relating to safeguarding of children and vulnerable adults are clear and well promoted through handbooks for tutors and for learners. Safeguarding of learners is adequate. Arrangements to ensure

safe working during sessions are at least satisfactory, and where potentially hazardous activities take place, such as cooking, risk assessments are in place. Venues for learning are welcoming, comfortable and safe.

- Quality assurance of courses is satisfactory. Lesson observations are undertaken against clear and demanding criteria, though the number completed each year has been low. Self-assessment is broadly accurate and the provider has a good understanding of the future areas for improvement for the service.

### What does East Sussex County Council need to do to improve further?

- Introduce a rigorous system for initial assessment of learners' literacy, numeracy and language skills on FLLN courses, one that accurately records the starting point of learners.
- Ensure that all learners have specific, measurable and challenging individual targets and that these are used to assess and promote their progress.
- Ensure tutors teaching on family literacy, language and numeracy courses are appropriately qualified.
- Develop closer links with appropriate agencies to ensure that information, advice and guidance are formally embedded within the programmes.
- Establish formal service level agreements with partner providers, ensuring that clear targets for improvement are set and monitored.

### Summary of the views of users as confirmed by inspectors

#### What learners like:

- the way courses show how their children are taught maths at school
- the ways that courses help them to keep their children healthy
- the teachers who give their time and effort freely to support their learning.

#### What learners would like to see improved:

- more courses at different times of the day, especially in the evening so that fathers and working parents can take part.

## Main inspection report

### Capacity to make and sustain improvement

Grade 3

8. ESCC has satisfactory capacity to make and sustain improvements. Realignment of family learning into the council's children's services directorate, within the family support strategy team, has led to productive links with other council services and strategic plans. Very productive partnership arrangements now exist with providers. Since the previous re-inspection, provision has generally improved in all aspects. Learners' outcomes have improved, and the impact of family learning on children's school success is now evident. The quality of teaching and learning remains good and ESCC has clear arrangements in place for observing and assuring the quality of the learners' experience. Most strengths in the provision have been maintained and developed further since the previous inspection and re-inspection. However, the provider has not fully addressed some areas for improvement from the previous re-inspection. For example, initial assessment and target setting remain insufficiently formalised and effective, and insufficient opportunities exist for WFL learners to take national tests in literacy and numeracy.

### Outcomes for learners

Grade 2

9. Development of learners' personal and social skills is good. Learners enjoy learning and develop confidence, knowledge and skills. They feel safe in learning venues. The provision offers a series of small and varied steps to develop self-confidence and social skills, and learners value the ways they can approach learning in manageable stages.
10. Learners feel more confident in pursuing healthier lifestyles and new learning opportunities. A number of programmes are aimed at healthy lifestyles that encourage learners to consider their own health and that of their families. Learners are able to describe the positive impact of the courses on their families.
11. Learners gain a good understanding of how their children learn. Courses give parents confidence about supporting their children in school. Headteachers confirm the positive impact of family learning on the progress of the children in school, and that family learning often provides a vehicle to engage disaffected parents.
12. Success rates in national tests are satisfactory. However, there are insufficient opportunities for learners to take the national tests on FLLN courses. Success rates on non-accredited courses are good, with learners reporting that they feel they have gained in confidence and have greater knowledge of how their children learn. In many cases however, targets agreed at the start of the courses are insufficiently precise and provide insufficient challenge.

13. Retention is outstanding, with almost all learners completing their programmes. On WFL programmes, retention is 99%, and on FLLN programmes it is 95%. All learners complete FLIF programmes. Retention rates have been consistently high for the past three years.
14. Attendance is good. Learners' attendance is carefully monitored by providers and the manager of the programmes. Absences are followed up promptly and learners are encouraged to attend.

## The quality of provision

Grade 2

15. Teaching and learning are good. In the best classes, learners undertake well-paced and challenging activities that provide incremental skills development. Learners are committed to, and fully engaged with, their programmes of study, and often form close groups that provide ongoing support networks. Learners often request further provision. They are very positive about their learning and that of their children. Teachers make good use of real-life examples that engage learners and increase relevance. They make effective use of praise and encouragement and learners engage well in discussions and respond appropriately to questions. In a minority of weaker sessions, insufficient attention is given to the specific needs of individual learners.
16. Learners' progress is not monitored sufficiently. All learners do not complete initial assessments in literacy, numeracy or language to capture adequately their skills levels and to identify their developmental needs. Where initial assessment is completed, there are generally ineffective links to individual learning plans. Initial assessment also has insufficient impact on individual target setting or lesson planning. Target setting on individual learning plans is often vague and unspecific. Group targets are usually stated on individual learning plans and learners are encouraged to state their personal goals. However, group targets are insufficiently specific and some targets for individual learners are not measurable. This area for improvement has been identified by the service in its self-assessment report.
17. Some tutors lack sufficient qualifications or skills to support learners' literacy and numeracy needs. Teachers do not tailor material to address learners' specific skills weaknesses. This area for improvement has been identified by the service in its self assessment report.
18. Targeting of provision is very effective and meets the needs and interests of disadvantaged communities and learners. Learners with severe barriers to learning are successfully targeted. ESCC reaches families in which the children may be at risk of underachieving and the adults have literacy, numeracy and/or language needs. Managers work collaboratively with partner agencies to meet the needs of disadvantaged communities and actively engage them in learning. Parents are often targeted by their child's school and invited to attend a family learning course.
19. Partnerships with schools, community centres, children's centres and other providers and recipients of provision are outstanding. ESCC works very



- productively with a diverse body of partner organisations, successfully meeting a broad range of needs. Smaller partners are given very good support to engage with provision and meet the needs of local communities. ESCC carefully targets areas where need is most evident, and managers are able to adapt models of engagement to suit both urban and rural community needs.
20. Support for learners is good, and learners feel valued by the staff. Partner agencies provide crèches where necessary and in response to identified need. Teachers provide good support for learners in the classroom, encouraging and praising attendance and effort. Learning support assistants support some classes, and are well used by teachers.
  21. The service provides clear information to help learners decide their next steps, and learners gain useful advice from teachers relating to progression opportunities. However, there is no systematic use of specialist information, advice and guidance staff at the end of courses. The service plans improved links with specialist agencies in future to address this need and ensure that learners have access to information about progression opportunities.

## Leadership and management

Grade 2

22. Strategic planning is generally good. Careful targeting of provision successfully reaches groups in the county's most deprived areas. Family learning has a good range of links to other council services, including the family support strategy group and the schools advisory service. Support from senior managers in children's services is good. Managers work successfully with the Traveller service, the English as an additional language service, and area children's centre managers. The family learning team makes good use of funding to encourage learners into programmes and to meet local and regional priorities for support and inclusion.
23. Managers promote high standards across the service. Partner providers are challenged to improve performance within a positive and very supportive culture. Communications are very good. Managers maintain close and constructive contact with partners, and use the family learning forum effectively to share information and good practice. However, agreements with provider partners do not contain sufficiently clear and demanding targets for improvement and do not set out clear monitoring arrangements.
24. Arrangements to promote and ensure safeguarding of learners and their children are satisfactory. All tutors employed by provider partners have completed a Criminal Records Bureau check. ESCC maintains its own up-to date register of checks on all tutors. Policies and procedures relating to safeguarding of children and vulnerable adults are clear and well promoted through handbooks for tutors and learners. ESCC communicates such policies effectively to partner providers. Tutors have a sound understanding of their role in ensuring the safety and safeguarding of learners and their children. Most

sessions take place in schools, in children's centres, or in community venues which are safe and welcoming.

25. Promotion of equality and diversity is satisfactory. Learners have a sound understanding of their own rights and responsibilities and they have an adequate understanding of wider equalities issues. ESCC's promotional and marketing materials promote engagement by under-represented groups and celebrate the achievements of all learners.
26. Users' views are collected and carefully analysed in order to improve provision and further meet needs. The service collects a wide range of learners' comments both during and at the close of courses. Feedback has brought about changes and improvements to provision; however, learners are not always made aware that their views have been taken into account or that provision has been adapted following feedback.
27. Quality assurance arrangements are generally satisfactory. Managers have a good understanding of where future areas for improvement lie, and have set a clear agenda for improvement and accountability amongst partner providers. The latest self-assessment report was broadly accurate in its identification of strengths and areas for improvement in provision. Value for money is good and resources are used effectively to secure quality provision.

## Information about the inspection

28. One of Her Majesty's Inspectors (HMI) and one additional inspector, assisted by the provider's Family Learning Manager, as nominee, carried out the inspection. Inspectors also took account of the provider's most recent self-assessment report and development plans, comments from the local Learning and Skills Council (LSC) and Skills Funding Agency (SFA), the previous inspection report, reports from the inspectorate's quality monitoring inspection, and data on learners and their achievement over the period since the previous inspection.
29. Inspectors used group and individual interviews, telephone calls and emails. They looked at questionnaires learners had recently completed on behalf of the provider. They also observed learning sessions, assessments and progress reviews.

**Record of Main Findings (RMF)**  
**East Sussex County Council**  
 Learning types: 19+ responsive: FE full- and part-time courses

Grades using the 4 point scale 1: Outstanding; 2: Good; 3: Satisfactory; 4: Inadequate	Overall	19+ Learner responsive
Approximate number of enrolled learners Part-time learners	56	56
Overall effectiveness	2	2
Capacity to improve	3	
Outcomes for learners	2	2
How well do learners achieve and enjoy their learning?	2	
How well do learners attain their learning goals? How well do learners progress?	2 3	
How well do learners improve their economic and social well-being through learning and development?	2	
How safe do learners feel?	2	
Are learners able to make informed choices about their own health and well-being?*	2	
How well do learners make a positive contribution to the community?*	-	
Quality of provision	2	2
How effectively do teaching, training and assessment support learning and development?	3	
How effectively does the provision meet the needs and interests of users?	2	
How well partnerships with schools, employers, community groups and others lead to benefits for learners?	1	
How effective are the care, guidance and support learners receive in helping them to achieve?	2	
Leadership and management	2	2
How effectively do leaders and managers raise expectations and promote ambition throughout the organisation?	2	
How effectively do governors and supervisory bodies provide leadership, direction and challenge?*		
How effectively does the provider promote the safeguarding of learners?	3	
How effectively does the provider actively promote equality and diversity, tackle discrimination and narrow the achievement gap?	3	
How effectively does the provider engage with users to support and promote improvement?	2	
How effectively does self-assessment improve the quality of the provision and outcomes for learners?	3	
How efficiently and effectively does the provider use its available resources to secure value for money?	2	

\*where applicable to the type of provision

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Royal Exchange Buildings  
St Ann's Square  
Manchester, M2 7LA

T: 08456 404040  
Textphone: 0161 618 8524  
E: [enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk](mailto:enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk)  
W: [www.ofsted.gov.uk](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk)

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