

INSPECTION REPORT

Sandwell Metropolitan Borough Council

03 November 2006



ADULT LEARNING
INSPECTORATE

Adult Learning Inspectorate

The Adult Learning Inspectorate (ALI) was established under the provisions of the *Learning and Skills Act 2000* to bring the inspection of all aspects of adult learning and work-based learning within the remit of a single inspectorate. The ALI is responsible for inspecting a wide range of government-funded learning, including:

- work-based learning for all people aged over 16
- provision in further education colleges for people aged 19 and over
- **learnirect** provision
- Adult and Community Learning
- training funded by Jobcentre Plus
- education and training in prisons, at the invitation of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Prisons
- adult information, advice and guidance services (**nextstep**).

Inspections are carried out in accordance with the Common Inspection Framework by teams of full-time inspectors and part-time associate inspectors who have knowledge of, and experience in, the work which they inspect. All providers are invited to nominate a senior member of their staff to participate in the inspection as a team member.

Pre-inspection analysis

The resources allocated to a cycle 2 inspection are primarily determined by the findings from the previous inspection. Account is also taken of information about achievement and retention obtained from the funding body, and any significant changes in the size or scope of the provision.

Where a provider has received good grades in cycle 1, the cycle 2 inspection is relatively light. If the provider offers a number of areas of learning, a restricted sample is inspected.

Where a provider has received satisfactory grades in cycle 1, the cycle 2 inspection is less intensive and it is possible that not all areas of learning are included.

Where there are significant unsatisfactory grades from cycle 1, the intensity of the cycle 2 inspection is broadly the same as cycle 1, and all significant areas of learning are inspected.

Providers that have not previously been inspected will receive a full inspection.

Overall effectiveness

The grades given for areas of learning and leadership and management will be used to arrive at a judgement about the overall effectiveness of the provider.

An **outstanding** provider should typically have leadership and management and at least half of the areas of learning judged to be a grade 1. All area of learning grades will be graded 1 or 2.

A **good** provider should have leadership and management and at least half of the area of learning grades judged to be a grade 2 or better. A good training provider should not have any grade 4s, and few grade 3s in the areas of learning.

A **satisfactory** provider should have adequate or better grades in leadership and management and in at least two thirds of the area of learning grades. An adequate provider might have a range of grades across areas of learning, some of which might be graded 4.

Provision will normally be deemed to be **inadequate** where more than one third of the area of learning grades and/or leadership and management are judged to be inadequate.

The final decision as to whether the provision is inadequate rests with the Chief Inspector of Adult Learning.

Grading

Inspectors use a four-point scale to summarise their judgements about the quality of provision in occupational/curriculum areas and Jobcentre Plus programmes, as well as to summarise their judgements about the quality of learning sessions. The same scale is used to describe the quality of leadership and management, which includes equality of opportunity and quality assurance. The descriptors for the four grades are:

- *grade 1 - outstanding*
- *grade 2 - good*
- *grade 3 - satisfactory*
- *grade 4 - inadequate*

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INSPECTION REPORT

DESCRIPTION OF THE PROVIDER

1. Sandwell Adult and Family Learning (SAFL) delivers adult and community learning in 11 of the 15 skills sector areas across the six towns of Wednesbury, West Bromwich, Smethwick, Oldbury, Rowley Regis and Tipton. The area has significant levels of deprivation following considerable industrial change. Skills shortages have been identified in a number of areas, including engineering, management and professional, information and communications technology (ICT) and customer care. The 2001 census shows that the proportion of people from minority ethnic groups in the region is 20.3 per cent, compared with the national average of 9.1 per cent. Unemployment in the area in August 2006 was around 5 per cent, compared with 2.6 per cent nationally.

2. SAFL offers provision in a wide range of community, education and faith venues and has several partnerships and collaborative working arrangements. Much of the work related to literacy, numeracy and language training is subcontracted to Sandwell College. The Black Country Learning and Skills Council funds most courses, but SAFL also receives funding from the Neighbourhood Learning for Deprived Communities and the Neighbourhood Renewal Fund (NRF).

3. Overall responsibility for adult education lies with Sandwell Metropolitan Borough Council (SMBC), under the cabinet member for education and children's services, schools and lifelong learning. SAFL is managed by a head of service, supported by an adult and community learning manager, a senior manager for quality, a manager for quality improvement and assurance, and a senior manager for resources and equality of opportunity. The eight main centres and three family education centres have a centre manager. Five curriculum co-ordinators work across the regions. Each of the six towns has a learning co-ordinator and two learning champions. Skills for life is managed by a strategic basic skills programme manager. Skills for life is the government's strategy on training in literacy, numeracy and the use of language. At the time of inspection SAFL has just over 1,000 learners.

OVERALL EFFECTIVENESS

Grade 3

4. **The overall effectiveness of the provision is satisfactory.** Provision is good in ICT and leisure, travel and tourism. It is satisfactory in arts, media and publishing. Leadership and management are satisfactory, as are the arrangements for equality of opportunity and quality assurance.

5. Achievement and standards are satisfactory. On courses where success rates can be measured they have improved significantly and are now good. Non-accredited courses, which make up most of the provision, have satisfactory retention which shows an improving trend. Differences between the achievement and retention of men and women are not significant, although SAFL has identified that Bangladeshi groups have lower achievement than others. Attendance is good, but many group sizes are small. Progression is satisfactory overall, with good progression in some areas. Learners develop good social skills, and gain health and lifestyle benefits from many classes.

6. The quality of provision is satisfactory. Teaching and learning have improved considerably since the previous inspection, and in some areas are now good. However, observation grades, which matched those given by inspectors, show that many classes are satisfactory. In better classes, teachers plan lessons well, and meet individual needs. In these classes, learners are encouraged to develop new skills and understanding. However, in some classes, learners are not challenged to extend their skills. Assessment is satisfactory overall. In some lessons it is very thorough and helpful, although in others learning is not sufficiently checked. SAFL is making satisfactory progress in developing the process for recognising and recording progress and achievement. However, learners' targets are not always sufficiently specific and time-bound. Records are not all sufficiently detailed to show progress clearly.

7. The range of programmes to meet learners' needs and activities is responsive and well matched to the borough's priorities. Lessons are available in 11 sector skills areas. SAFL develops and maintains particularly good partnerships with other providers in the area. Careful curriculum planning avoids duplication of courses and extends the range of local provision. SMBC has a clear focus on developing literacy and numeracy skills in the area. Projects use a range of funding sources and work in close partnership with local and national organisations. Projects are developed in consultation with communities. Partnership work also provides a good opportunity to develop a coherent lifelong learning service across the area, delivered by a range of providers. Community development initiatives and family learning programmes offer an increasing number of new learners the opportunity to learn new skills, gain confidence, and experience the benefits of learning. However, classes related to the skills for life strategy have a wide range of levels within classes but an insufficient range of activities to ensure active learning and sufficient challenge and support for all learners. Currently, the planned programme is too small to meet the needs and interests of learners.

8. Most learners are well supported by their teachers. SAFL employs an information, advice and guidance manager who offers impartial and carefully tailored advice to learners at all centres. In ICT, good use is made of adaptive technology to support the needs of learners appropriately. Creches are available at many centres, and SAFL uses funding well to help learners pay for childcare and travel and to overcome hardship. All learners are initially assessed for additional needs. SAFL has a small team of learning support teachers, supplemented by volunteers and learners from their own teaching programmes who offer learning support. All the centre venues, and most of the venues SAFL uses, are accessible to learners with restricted mobility.

9. The inspection team had some confidence in the reliability of the self-assessment process. The self-assessment process is inclusive. Staff and learners and senior managers in SMBC contribute effectively and regularly to review the provision. However, data is not used sufficiently to make judgements. While appropriate strengths and weaknesses were identified accurately in some curriculum areas, this is not consistent across the provision. Some weaknesses were not identified, and some satisfactory aspects were identified as strengths. However, the report is well focused on improving provision for learners.

10. The provider has demonstrated that it is in a good position to make improvements. Success rates, where they are measurable, and retention and achievement have all improved, in many cases significantly, since the previous inspection. At the same time

SAFL has significantly increased the number of new learners. The inspection grade profile shows a continuous improvement. Measures to overcome weaknesses identified at the previous inspection and reinspection are effective. Weaknesses identified by the provider in the self-assessment report have clear and specific actions to remedy them, and SAFL has already implemented many of these.

KEY CHALLENGES FOR SANDWELL METROPOLITAN BOROUGH COUNCIL:

- improve the use of data
- further improve teaching and learning
- increase the promotion of equality and diversity within the curriculum
- further identify progression routes, within courses and across the area
- analyse the effect of widening participation to further develop the service
- further develop monitoring and target-setting to support learners' progress and achievement
- further develop and establish literacy and numeracy training

GRADES

grade 1 = outstanding, grade 2 = good, grade 3 = satisfactory, grade 4 = inadequate

Grades awarded at inspection

Leadership and management		3
Contributory grades:		
Equality of opportunity		3
Quality improvement		3

Information and communications technology			2
Contributory areas:	Number of learners	Contributory grade	
ICT for users			
Adult and community learning	351	2	2

Leisure, travel and tourism			2
Contributory areas:	Number of learners	Contributory grade	
Sport, leisure and recreation			
Adult and community learning	239	2	2

Arts, media and publishing		3
Contributory areas:	Number of learners	Contributory grade
<i>Fine arts</i> Adult and community learning	86	3
<i>Crafts</i> Adult and community learning	95	3

ABOUT THE INSPECTION

11. SAFL offers programmes in ICT, leisure, travel and tourism, and in arts, media and publishing, all of which this inspection reported on and graded. Together, these programmes currently make up 77 per cent of the provision. SAFL also offers land-based provision, retail and commercial enterprise, health, public services and care, social sciences, and education and training, all of which were too small to be included in the inspection. In engineering and manufacturing technologies, languages, literature and culture, preparation for life and work, and family learning, although provision was too small to be graded, it was sampled and findings were included in the overall leadership and management report. The inspection took place during a single visit to the provider.

Number of inspectors	7
Number of inspection days	35
Number of learners interviewed	194
Number of staff interviewed	56
Number of subcontractors interviewed	1
Number of locations/sites/learning centres visited	18
Number of partners/external agencies interviewed	12
Number of visits	1

Leadership and Management

Strengths

- particularly good planning of provision to meet local priorities
- well-developed and well-maintained partnerships to promote learning to under-represented groups

Weaknesses

- insufficient reinforcement of awareness of equality and diversity

Information and communications technology

ICT for users

Strengths

- high overall success rates
- good development of learners' skills
- good teaching and learning in most sessions
- particularly responsive provision in well-located venues
- good use of assistive and supportive technology
- good operational management

Weaknesses

- poor support for additional needs in some community centres
- insufficient use of resources to promote equality and diversity

Leisure, travel and tourism

Sport, leisure and recreation

Strengths

- good development of skills
- good teaching and learning
- good partnership work to meet community and learner needs
- particularly responsive curriculum management

Weaknesses

- insufficient recording of learners' starting points and specific targets

Arts, media and publishing

Strengths

- particularly effective demonstration of new techniques

Weaknesses

- insufficient focus on learning in too many lessons

WHAT LEARNERS LIKE ABOUT SANDWELL METROPOLITAN BOROUGH COUNCIL:

- the care and support from centre staff and tutors
- the welcome - 'we're never made to feel stupid'
- enjoying learning - 'lots of laughter and fun'
- getting positive feedback
- the way tutors explain things in easy language
- lots of new things to do
- variety - 'every week is different'

WHAT LEARNERS THINK SANDWELL METROPOLITAN BOROUGH COUNCIL COULD IMPROVE:

- increase the time in lessons
- the way views are collected
- the number of times they have to enrol in one year

DETAILED INSPECTION FINDINGS

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

Grade 3

Strengths

- particularly good planning of provision to meet local priorities
- well-developed and well-maintained partnerships to promote learning to under-represented groups

Weaknesses

- insufficient reinforcement of awareness of equality and diversity

12. SAFL plans its provision well to meet local priorities. Its strategy and vision support SMBC's policies and priorities to develop co-operative working between all communities and providers. It works effectively with a good range of partners to prevent duplication of provision. It provides courses in areas where needs have been identified, and successfully engages new learners from its priority groups. In 2002-03, only 347 new learners started courses. For each of the previous three years well over 3,000 new learners have been enrolled. Funding from a variety of sources is used creatively to provide adequate facilities and learning opportunities to priority groups. The service makes effective use of its full-time initial advice and guidance officer to help learners with the transition to other providers or to further learning opportunities. SAFL is an active strategic and operational partner in community development and community learning. The service contributes to capacity building through the development of a range of teaching qualifications, training for volunteers and skills for life awareness training for staff. It has a productive relationship with the NRF skills for life strategy manager and NRF funding is well used to build capacity and support curriculum development. Changes to staffing structures reflect the new priorities, and lines of responsibility are clearer since the reinspection. Fewer tutors now work more hours, and more tutors are engaged on fractional contracts to facilitate staff development and capacity building.

13. Communications have improved since the previous inspection. A fortnightly newsletter which contains relevant and important information goes to all staff. Staff attend regular and minuted meetings with standardised agendas to discuss all aspects of the provision. The staff handbook is now a specially designed diary containing all the information that staff need to do their jobs. All staff can access the quality databases on the internet. This contains useful information for managers and tutors as well as shared learning resources. Effective, regular contact between centre managers and curriculum managers brings together the administrative and teaching and learning aspects of the service. Learners who are involved in the learners' forum visit outreach centres to collect, report and act on the views of other learners. In some cases, the service has responded positively to learners' requests, for example by providing facilities for refreshments in some centres.

14. Operational management is satisfactory overall, and in most curriculum areas it is good. The service has developed key performance indicators and targets are continuously monitored and reviewed. It has met its targets. Effective strategies give staff greater autonomy and responsibility for their areas. However, too few administrative staff and

managers cover these roles and this puts pressure on their ability to manage their provision. At present the provision is small, and managers are coping adequately with the extra demands on their time.

15. SAFL's strategy is to improve the quality of the provision before expanding it, and the service invests heavily in staff training and development. Staff training is linked to strategic direction, and is planned by using information from induction, lesson observations and appraisal. Staff are contractually obliged to attend training and development, and SAFL takes strong action to ensure that all staff comply with this. The service employs consultants to provide some training for its staff. Unqualified tutors are being supported to gain teaching qualifications, and the service now has accreditation to deliver its own teacher training programmes. New tutors are only employed if they already have teaching qualifications.

Equality of opportunity

Contributory grade 3

16. Equality of opportunity is satisfactory. SAFL skilfully develops and successfully maintains partnerships to promote learning to disadvantaged groups. Through a mutually beneficial arrangement with the library service over the past six years, SAFL enrolments in libraries have increased from none to around 700. Most of these are in ICT, maximising the use of computers at quiet times of the day. In an extended school partnership with a secondary school in one of the most educationally disadvantaged areas of Sandwell, parents are engaged in a variety of learning and community activities. Work with young parents and pre-school organisations successfully engages new learners. SAFL matches learning opportunities to local needs through learning co-ordinators and champions in each of the six towns. A recent job and training event in an area of high unemployment attracted 91 people, some of whom have already had job interviews or skills development. Provision in black and minority ethnic community centres and places of worship is advertised to all learners. For example, yoga classes at the Hindu temple attract a culturally diverse range of learners. Other partnerships have developed discrete, relevant provision for groups that are new to learning. SAFL offers information, advice and guidance not only to its own learners but to other residents of Sandwell. This guidance is impartial and is designed to match individual needs.

17. During reinspection, SAFL was judged to have a satisfactory approach to the provision of literacy, numeracy and language support. The strategy continues to be satisfactory. The borough has developed a comprehensive, updated skills for life strategy. A high level of commitment within the council includes the appointment of a scrutiny committee. SAFL's strategy reflects the borough's overall approach and supports borough targets, although the service is yet to develop its own relevant policy. The inclusion of literacy and numeracy provision across the curriculum is at an early stage of development. Some initiatives to establish skills for life in widening participation activities have taken place, although SAFL does not analyse the development of skills or progression of learners.

18. Since the previous inspection SAFL has appointed an equality of opportunity manager to promote equality. An equalities management group, which includes community members meets regularly. Although provision in family learning, and for vulnerable learners who are less than 25 years of age is very small, SAFL has appropriate arrangements to meet the requirements of 'Every Child Matters', the Government paper which ensures that all children are supported. All staff are fully informed about how to

access the council's child protection officer, and are made aware of their responsibilities for children and vulnerable adults. They receive information about new legislation, and work has already started to raise awareness on disability equality. Learners' complaints are managed appropriately, and learners have ready access to suggestion boxes at each centre. The equalities manager disseminates good practice from other organisations.

19. SAFL satisfactorily analyses data on all aspects of equality, and uses it to set appropriate and realistic targets, most of which are met. It also analyses data on staff ethnicity and age, which again is used to set targets to ensure that the staff profile matches that in the community. Currently, 32 per cent of tutors and 16 per cent of administrative staff are from black and minority ethnic backgrounds. Overall, the number of black and minority ethnic learners has increased and is slightly higher than that in the community. SAFL has identified groups with low achievement on programmes and is taking action to remedy this.

20. SAFL has a satisfactory policy on equality of opportunity. In addition to SMBC's policy, it has a simpler version that can be understood by learners. All its own centres comply with the Disability Discrimination Act 1995, and it helps schools provide equipment such as toilets for learners with restricted mobility, and external lighting. In the few centres which do not comply, SAFL advertises the information in a simple chart for learners. Around 30 staff are currently attending diversity training. However, staff have not received disability awareness training since the reinspection. Many new staff have not had this training. The reinspection identified the use of a compact disc to train staff in all aspects of equality and diversity. Although this is comprehensive and staff are paid to complete activities which check their learning, it is now out of date, and some staff have still not completed the activities.

21. Awareness of equality and diversity is insufficiently reinforced for learners throughout the curriculum. This is especially significant in an area where community cohesion is a council priority. SMBC's strategic aim for first steps provision is to help learners build confidence to move to other areas or to progress to more diverse groups. No planning is in place to help learners move from niche provision to other provision. Equality of opportunity is mentioned on observation paperwork, but is not always recorded in sufficient depth. Learners do not have clear guidance about what constitutes harassment and bullying. This is significant in provision which targets disadvantaged and under-represented groups. However, the council has a behaviour policy and the learners' charter outlines their rights and responsibilities.

Quality improvement

Contributory grade 3

22. Overall, quality improvement is satisfactory. SAFL has introduced successful measures to improve the quality of its provision in most areas of learning. Retention and success rates are improving and are generally good. The service works hard to improve its quality systems to underpin the quality of teaching and learning in the area. It employs a quality improvement officer to oversee this process. The service has two quality websites which host all the service's quality procedures as well as forms and guidance for tutors. Tutors and managers share resources through this system. The service is currently developing its virtual learning environment to extend and enhance the sharing of good practice, and to provide training and development opportunities for its staff.

23. Data is collected, and used strategically to plan provision. SAFL identifies how well it

attracts learners from its priority groups, and targets under-represented groups using this information. Some centre managers and curriculum managers can now enter information onto the management information system to continuously update it, giving a much more accurate overview of the provision. Plans to develop this further will allow more people to input information. Reports can be drawn from this database in a variety of formats, and this information is now used much more productively by all centre managers in their planning. However, data is incomplete and not easily accessible for all centre managers. For example, progression data is not available from widening participation activities.

24. The service collects feedback from learners at all stages of their learning journey and responds positively whenever possible. Feedback is also used to plan provision and to monitor the quality of teaching and learning.

25. The service concentrates much of its resources on improving the quality of teaching and learning, and has a revised system of observing teaching and learning. Current data shows an improvement in teaching from the previous inspection. The current system is very new and replaces a system which was not adequately identifying problems. The paperwork used to record the observations concentrates on administrative systems as well as on teaching, learning and attainment. Observers have been trained, and all observers have teaching qualifications at some level. However, some observers are less experienced than others, and in some cases feedback to tutors is insufficiently developmental. Observations are moderated to check that grades match judgements. Inspectors tested the observation process during the inspection and found that, although grades matched, judgements about improvements were not always identified, or were sometimes insufficiently clear to create a meaningful action plan.

26. Arrangements for managing subcontracted provision are satisfactory. SAFL monitors this provision through its system of observations of teaching and learning and holds regular, productive meetings with the subcontractor. This reinforces the planning of provision to avoid duplication.

27. The self-assessment process is inclusive and represents the views of learners and partners. Tutors and managers in each area of learning compile mini self-assessment reports which are summarised in the main report. The findings in the published self-assessment report are broadly similar to those identified at inspection in some areas of learning, while in others, strengths identified by the provider were no more than normal practice and some weaknesses were not adequately identified. Action-planning arising from the self-assessment process was successful in dealing with problems, but some areas for improvement were not identified.

28. Internal verification is satisfactory. It is sufficiently rigorous and comprehensive.

29. SAFL has developed some effective methods of monitoring learners' progress in ICT. However, the use of individual learning plans is not fully developed in art. In these cases, targets are insufficiently meaningful and learners' progress against targets is not measured and recorded. Arrangements for recording and recognising learners' progress and achievements are broadly satisfactory, and in some areas they are good. The provider is developing the arrangements further to ensure that they are fully effective across all areas of learning.

AREAS OF LEARNING

Information and communications technology

Grade 2

Contributory areas:	Number of learners	Contributory grade
<i>ICT for users</i>		2
Adult and community learning	351	2

30. ICT training is provided through introductory and leisure courses and programmes offering national awards at levels 1, 2 and 3 in a wide range of venues across the borough. The service provides taster courses, summer schools and longer programmes for national qualifications. Specific provision is offered for deprived neighbourhoods. Nationally accredited awards account for 83 per cent of the provision. Drop-in facilities and workshops are also provided in some locations. Progression to courses at higher levels is available and learners are made aware of these opportunities.

31. Courses range from two hours for taster sessions to 36 weeks for the accredited programmes. ICT is also provided as part of family learning. At the time of inspection, 74 classes, taught by 19 tutors, were operating in 25 venues. Current enrolments include 351 learners, of whom 251 are women. Twenty-three per cent of learners are from minority ethnic communities, and those with disabilities or other specific needs make up 20 per cent of learners. Currently, 129 learners are aged over 50. Enrolments are projected to reach 2,500 in 2006-07. ICT represents around 60 per cent of the total provision for the service.

ICT for users

Strengths

- high overall success rates
- good development of learners' skills
- good teaching and learning in most sessions
- particularly responsive provision in well-located venues
- good use of assistive and supportive technology
- good operational management

Weaknesses

- poor support for additional needs in some community centres
- insufficient use of resources to promote equality and diversity

Achievement and standards

32. Learners achieve high success rates. These show a consistent and sustained improvement since 2002-03 when the success rate, overall, was 55 per cent with 1,581 learners. In 2005-06, the success rate increased to 90 per cent, with 3,122 learners.

33. Learners develop good individual computing skills. They are enthusiastic and well motivated and make good progress. They develop skills and consolidate learning while progressing from basic and intermediate computing courses to more advanced levels. Learners acquire good personal and practical skills. They are able to write business letters, design complex tables and set up e-mail accounts. Many learners can now use the internet at home and send electronic messages. Some build websites and enjoy processing digital photographs. Learners enjoy working independently and supporting each other in classes. Attendance rates are high.

The quality of provision

34. Teaching and learning are good. A wide range of teaching and learning methods challenges and inspires learners. In most classes, tutors plan and organise lessons well. Clear objectives are set. Lesson plans have a clear structure, are detailed and highly individual according to learners' needs identified at initial assessment. Frequent checks on learning take place with good use of open questions to check learners' knowledge and progress throughout sessions.

35. Good identification of individual learning needs through initial assessment and completion of individual learning plans is evident throughout the provision. Learners have their own assessment objectives and learning goals, with clear short- and long-term targets and timescales for completion. They monitor their own progress and formally record achievements at the end of each lesson. They know and understand which units they have completed and when and how subsequent units will be achieved. All learners understand potential progression routes and opportunities to broaden their computer skills. In many lessons, tutors provide detailed guidance and support for learners.

36. The provision responds well to the needs of learners. Centres are welcoming, with good facilities and equipment, often including childcare. SAFL liaises well with community organisations and partners when planning courses, to ensure they are equitably distributed across the borough to promote access. New programmes match learners' needs. Learners attend training close to their homes or in traditional community venues. Effective planning enables courses to be moved between venues as demand for them fluctuates. New provision has sufficient resources to meet demands. Where there are waiting lists these are managed efficiently and equitably.

37. Supportive and assistive technology is used well to meet learners' needs. All learners have an assessment of their support needs at registration. Where required, a support plan is immediately put into place. SAFL ensures that ICT facilities are inclusive for all learners. In the main centres a variety of assistive equipment such as magnifiers, large screens and trackballs is available. One learner has an individually adapted chair to support back problems. Others can participate well in group activities by using adaptive equipment which supports reading and memorising instructions. Good use is made of hearing loops and a specialist microphone to help learners who have a hearing impairment to take part in discussions. However, in a few centres, interactive learning technology is not used sufficiently by tutors.

38. Information, advice and guidance are satisfactory. Learners are able to access advice and information about ICT and other courses through a dedicated officer who is currently producing detailed mapping of courses and progression opportunities in all local

providers.

Leadership and management

39. The provision is well managed. The curriculum manager has good links with centre managers in the borough and with all tutors. Good formal and informal communications take place between managers and staff. Three fractional tutors support and mentor part-time staff and help share good practice. All tutors are involved in leading particular qualifications and in the development of new qualifications. All documents are placed on the quality website and are well used and adapted by tutors. Queries are promptly answered through discussion groups. Staff make use of good opportunities to attend training courses to update skills, including e-learning. New individual learning plans and learner work records are effectively implemented throughout the provision. Teaching is regularly observed and is improving.

40. Learners have a satisfactory awareness of health and safety and equality of opportunity, and of their relevance to learning and the workplace.

41. Verification and moderation processes are satisfactory across the provision.

42. Health and safety is dealt with in a satisfactory manner with well-established procedures for risk assessment and hazard reporting. Tutors make learners aware of health and safety in most lessons.

43. Learners in some community centres have poor support for literacy and numeracy. All learners are assessed at the start of their course and the results are passed to the basic skills co-ordinator. However, in some community centres, learners who need support have not received appropriate support after six weeks. These learners have difficulties reading and understanding computer terminology and using learning resources effectively.

44. Equality and diversity is insufficiently reinforced through the curriculum. Resources do not reflect the cultural diversity of the local communities to enrich and enhance learning, or promote learners' understanding of their own and other cultures.

Leisure, travel and tourism**Grade 2**

Contributory areas:	Number of learners	Contributory grade
<i>Sport, leisure and recreation</i>		2
Adult and community learning	239	2

45. SAFL provides a range of non-accredited and accredited courses in sport. Four accredited programmes are offered including pool lifeguards and renewals of the certificate and the community sports leader award. The ABC certificate in developing fitness was offered at level 1 for the first time in 2006-07 and this replaced a fitness qualification at level 2. The courses include 41 non-accredited programmes in golf, badminton, yoga, Tai Chi, keep fit, aerobics, swimming and personal fitness. Programmes take place at a range of venues across the borough. They are offered during the day, evenings and weekends. A family learning swimming programme is offered on Saturdays. Programmes run for between 10 and 30 weeks and classes are between one and three hours' duration. At the time of inspection, 239 learners are attending courses, of whom 78 per cent are women, 18 per cent are from minority ethnic groups and 7 per cent have a disability. Programmes are delivered by 18 tutors supported by a full-time curriculum development manager. Currently, 19 venues are used.

Sport, leisure and recreation*Strengths*

- good development of skills
- good teaching and learning
- good partnership work to meet community and learner needs
- particularly responsive curriculum management

Weaknesses

- insufficient recording of learners' starting points and specific targets

Achievement and standards

46. Learners have a good understanding of how exercise benefits their health. They thoroughly understand how particular parts of the body work and how to improve their posture, strength, endurance and alleviate stress. Some learners have shown improvements in their health after injury or illness and now complete everyday tasks more easily. Others improve their personal lifestyle through reducing stress and controlling their weight. They also achieve mental stimulation, improved confidence and greater focus at work. Learners use good specific movements in exercise programmes. Some develop advanced and dynamic breathing techniques. They successfully achieve some complex step patterns with good co-ordination when moving to music. In golf and badminton, learners demonstrate a good range of skills. Learners have a good understanding of how they have improved and what their future goals are.

47. Attendance patterns during the current term are good. Reasons for absence are well

known by tutors.

48. Retention and success rates are satisfactory overall with improving trends since 2004-05. The overall current retention on all programmes is 97.5 per cent.

The quality of provision

49. Teaching and learning are good. Tutors deliver lessons enthusiastically which motivates learners to succeed. They have a good knowledge of their learners' levels and abilities. Individual needs are met through a good balance of demonstrations, differentiation of movements and observation of performance. Learners receive good individual support to acquire specific skills. At the beginning of yoga and exercise programmes, tutors carefully discuss problems with learners and offer alternative routines where appropriate. Health issues are continually reviewed in sessions and individual needs are met. Learners are fully involved in this. They can work independently at their own pace, but are constantly encouraged and challenged. Equipment is well used to meet individual abilities. All sessions observed were well paced and clearly and safely structured. Learners in yoga classes benefit from receiving instruction in several languages to meet individual needs.

50. Good partnership arrangements meet community and learners' needs. Effective communication networks include regular contact between SAFL's managers and partners. Strong links are forged with extended schools and the leisure trust to plan an appropriate curriculum. New initiatives are currently taking place to develop provision with the primary healthcare trust to support people who could benefit from exercise programmes. Work with a young women's pregnancy unit develops a better understanding of healthy lifestyles and health-related accredited courses. Learners benefit from a wide range of easily accessed community venues.

51. Established progression routes are now available in yoga and exercise programmes and learners identify their future progress. Family learning swimming is developed with learners who are then encouraged to further their swimming skills. Some learners have progressed to become lifeguards and have gained employment. One learner is now a qualified fitness instructor. Since the reinspection, learners have a better awareness of the career opportunities available to them.

52. Resources and facilities for teaching and learning are satisfactory. Appropriate venues which are suitable for exercise programmes and games are located in the community. Lessons take place in school swimming pools, sports halls, gymnasiums and community halls and large classrooms. Appropriate changing facilities are offered at some venues. A wide range of well-maintained resources is available to support programmes. Attention to health and safety and risk assessment is satisfactory.

53. Learners receive satisfactory advice and guidance and are aware of how they can progress through different levels. They are directed to local golf courses and clubs to further their experience. Few badminton clubs exist in the area, so the tutor arranges access to local leisure centres for learners.

54. The individual learning plan does not fully identify starting points for learners. Specific short-term individual targets are insufficiently recorded and prior standards of performance

and learning are not identified. Lesson plans and progress and achievement documents do not adequately differentiate between individual needs. Full evaluation of learning is not based on a record of progress against targets. Not all tutors have responsibility for negotiating targets with learners. A list of suggested targets to identify starting points for learners is not applied consistently. However, aspects of assessment are satisfactory. Learners routinely complete health questionnaires, and initial sport-specific initial assessment determines the appropriate level on which to enrol. On non-accredited programmes, learners have the opportunity to discuss their progress with the tutor.

Leadership and management

55. Curriculum management is good and particularly responsive to developing the provision and improving the quality of the learning experience. Effective communication with centre managers determines the curriculum offer. Close links with partners and effective pre-course meetings fully explore community needs and identify suitable venues. Ways of recording learners' progress and achievement are being developed, as are quality systems, but these are not yet fully established. Good support for tutors includes support from the curriculum development manager and relevant staff development. The observation of teaching and learning takes place regularly with a lead tutor who is trained to cover specialist areas of the provision. Issues arising from the process are quickly action-planned and monitored to improve performance. Budgets are managed effectively to provide specialist equipment. Good liaison with centre managers matches funding to enhance the delivery of the programmes.

56. Staff experience, specialist expertise and qualifications are satisfactory.

57. The self-assessment report is accurate. The judgements in the report are well matched with the inspection findings.

Arts, media and publishing**Grade 3**

Contributory areas:	Number of learners	Contributory grade
<i>Fine arts</i> Adult and community learning	86	3
<i>Crafts</i> Adult and community learning	95	3

58. Currently, 181 learners are on visual and performing arts courses. Course subjects include painting and drawing, calligraphy, card making, pottery, jewellery, dressmaking, patchwork and quilting, tap dancing and music. All courses are non-accredited and most have learners of mixed ability. Courses take place at a range of community venues including places of worship, a library and a museum. Day, evening and weekend courses are provided, most of which last for two hours a week over 10 weeks. Taster courses of between one and five weeks are offered throughout the year. In total, 80 per cent of learners are aged over 50, 78 per cent are women, and 15 per cent are from minority ethnic groups. There are 13 tutors and a curriculum manager.

Strengths

- particularly effective demonstration of new techniques

Weaknesses

- insufficient focus on learning in too many lessons

Achievement and standards

59. Learners in visual and performing arts enjoy their studies and develop social and emotional benefits from learning. In some lessons, learners maintain good levels of skill through many years of practising their craft. Learners are well motivated, and enjoy learning with their peers. In the better lessons, learners make significant progress. For example, learners in a watercolour lesson produced sensitive observational sketches showing the effects of changing seasons using a different colour palette for each one. A recent public exhibition in the local town hall effectively celebrated and publicised learners' achievements.

60. Since 2004-05, retention has been more rigorously and accurately recorded. It has improved significantly from 75 per cent in 2004-05 to 86 per cent in 2005-06.

The quality of provision

61. Skilled tutors demonstrate new techniques particularly effectively, prepare well and use visual aids. They carefully introduce learners to new techniques. Learners develop skills and extend their knowledge. For example, in a creative sewing lesson, learners were shown how to use stencils with fabrics to make cards and motifs to enhance their work.

62. Resources are satisfactory overall with materials and small equipment provided as required. However, in a few lessons, tutors do not have the necessary equipment. For

example, in a pottery class one venue does not have a kiln and the tutor supplies small portable pottery wheels for his learners' use. Accommodation is not always suitable. Some rooms are too small and impede the learners' ability to produce work.

63. Support for learners is satisfactory overall. Tutors support and encourage learners sensitively. They provide specific advice and guidance and create a friendly and welcoming atmosphere. Advice about possible progression is provided by an independent service and SAFL's information, advice and guidance officer visits all centres to offer help on an individual basis. Some learners have progressed to other courses. However, some tutors do very little initial assessment to discover learners' aptitude or previous experience. Initial assessment records do not show what skill levels learners have attained before they start the course.

64. Learners' needs are satisfactorily met. An appropriate range of courses is offered across visual arts with a small amount of provision in performing arts, including music. Visual arts includes some interesting craft work such as creative textiles and card making. SAFL has some targeted work in Eastern music and courses for Asian women. Most courses are for learners of mixed ability and have no differentiated levels. The service uses a range of venues across the region and has recently moved some provision into areas which had little provision previously to meet learners' needs. Managers are also working together across the service to develop first steps learning in family learning centres. For example, SAFL has successfully run courses in conjunction with a local women's group. Short taster courses are now run to test viability throughout the year and new courses have begun, for example in jewellery making and creative card making. Plans to develop new courses as progression opportunities for learners on targeted first steps learning courses are in place. Senior managers are developing strategic links with local providers. Arrangements to assess and support learners' additional needs are not yet in place.

65. Tutors do not focus sufficiently on learning in enough lessons. Lessons are mostly workshop style. Some tutors spend too long demonstrating techniques that learners who have attended for several years are not interested in and do not use to improve their skills. Some learners have individual goals such as practising a skill and are not given challenging specific goals that can be used to measure achievement or progress. Some tutors use insufficiently varied teaching methods, and demonstrate techniques without checking understanding. Where tutors have set either group or individual learning goals these are not sufficiently measurable. An appropriate record of learners' progress and achievement is beginning to be developed with some good use of photographs to capture what learners have produced. However, few photographs are annotated. These images show what has been done and not how well learners have progressed. This is a recent initiative and not all staff are using cameras yet to record learners' work. Some tutors are conscientious in completing paperwork, but learning aims are too broad on schemes of work and lesson plans contain few measurable learning aims or goals.

Leadership and management

66. Curriculum management is satisfactory. Since the previous inspection, SAFL has appointed a new curriculum manager and communications with staff have improved. The manager takes a systematic approach to checking the quality of provision. Sufficient staff development is offered and staff are required to attend regular training events in aspects of teaching and learning, such as the introduction of a process for recording progress and

achievement. Issues arising from learners' feedback or observations of teaching and learning are dealt with effectively. The manager formally consults with staff and monitors the completion of paperwork more systematically. However, the observations of teaching and learning do not sufficiently deal with aspects of poor teaching. Observers identified areas for improvement but did not sufficiently take account of the effect of these on learning. Grading was overgenerous. The self-assessment process involved tutors sufficiently and the service broadly recognises that the area has some aspects to improve. However, many of the summary strengths are no more than normal practice or are not sufficiently key, and weaknesses identified on inspection were not recognised by the area in the self-assessment report. The manager is aware of the need to improve target-setting with more measurable learning aims and goals for individual learners.

