

# INSPECTION REPORT

## **Metropolitan Training Reinspection**

16 July 2003



ADULT LEARNING  
INSPECTORATE

## METROPOLITAN TRAINING REINSPECTION

### Grading

Inspectors use a seven-point scale to summarise their judgements about the quality of learning sessions. The descriptors for the seven grades are:

- *grade 1 - excellent*
- *grade 2 - very good*
- *grade 3 - good*
- *grade 4 - satisfactory*
- *grade 5 - unsatisfactory*
- *grade 6 - poor*
- *grade 7 - very poor.*

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

- *grade 1 - outstanding*
- *grade 2 - good*
- *grade 3 - satisfactory*
- *grade 4 - unsatisfactory*
- *grade 5 - very weak.*

The two grading scales relate to each other as follows:

SEVEN-POINT SCALE	FIVE-POINT SCALE
grade 1	grade 1
grade 2	
grade 3	grade 2
grade 4	grade 3
grade 5	grade 4
grade 6	grade 5
grade 7	

## 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 training within the remit of a single inspectorate. The ALI is responsible for inspecting a wide range of government-funded learning, including:

- work-based training for all people over 16
- provision in further education colleges for people aged 19 and over
- the University for Industry's **learndirect** provision
- Adult and Community Learning
- learning and job preparation programmes funded by Jobcentre Plus
- education and training in prisons, at the invitation of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Prisons.

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.



## SUMMARY

### The provider

Metropolitan Training is part of Wigan Council. It has three training centres in Wigan and one in Leigh. It provides work-based learning for young people in construction, engineering, hairdressing, business administration, health and social care, and land-based programmes. There is also a small programme for Life Skills learners. The number of learners in information and communications technology and retailing was too small to be inspected. Currently there are 300 learners, of whom 83 are advanced modern apprentices and 157 are following foundation modern apprenticeships. Fifty-five learners are following national vocational qualifications (NVQ) training programmes. Five learners are on a foundation programme in Life Skills.

### Overall judgement

The quality of training is adequate to meet the reasonable needs of those receiving it. More specifically, provision for foundation learners is good and it is satisfactory in all other areas of learning. Leadership and management are good. Arrangements for quality assurance are satisfactory and equality of opportunity is good.

### Grades awarded

	Original	Reinspection
<b>Leadership and management</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>2</b>
Contributory grades:		
Equality of opportunity	4	2
Quality assurance	4	3

	Original	Reinspection
<b>Land-based provision</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>3</b>
Contributory grades:		
Work-based learning for young people	5	3

	Original	Reinspection
<b>Construction</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>3</b>
Contributory grades:		
Work-based learning for young people	5	3

	Original	Reinspection
<b>Engineering, technology &amp; manufacturing</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>3</b>
Contributory grades:		
Work-based learning for young people	4	3

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	Original	Reinspection
<b>Business administration, management &amp; professional</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>3</b>
Contributory grades:		
Work-based learning for young people	5	3

	Original	Reinspection
<b>Hairdressing &amp; beauty therapy</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>3</b>
Contributory grades:		
Work-based learning for young people	3	3

	Original	Reinspection
<b>Health, social care &amp; public services</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>3</b>
Contributory grades:		
Work-based learning for young people	4	3

	Original	Reinspection
<b>Foundation programmes</b>		<b>2</b>
Contributory grades:		
Work-based learning for young people		2

During the reinspection process, the inspection team identified the following key strengths, weaknesses and other improvements needed:

### **KEY STRENGTHS**

- very good learner support
- good work placements
- thorough review process
- good strategic planning and implementation
- effective strategies for improving retention

### **KEY WEAKNESSES**

- low achievement rates in work-based learning
- insufficient monitoring of subcontractors

### **OTHER IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED**

- clearer short-term targets during progress reviews for construction learners
- more work-based assessment in hairdressing
- further development of quality assurance arrangements

## THE REINSPECTION

1. Nine inspectors spent a total of 31 days with the company. They interviewed 80 learners and 36 staff, and visited 34 work placements. Eight learning sessions were observed and 71 individual learning plans and 66 portfolios were examined.

Grades awarded to learning sessions at the original inspection

	Grade 1	Grade 2	Grade 3	Grade 4	Grade 5	Grade 6	Grade 7	Total
Land-based provision	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	1
Construction	0	0	1	1	1	0	0	3
Engineering, technology & manufacturing	0	2	1	0	0	0	0	3
Retailing, customer service & transportation	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	1
Hairdressing & beauty therapy	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	1
Health, social care & public services	0	1	1	1	0	0	0	3
<b>Total</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>12</b>

Grades awarded to learning sessions at reinspection

	Grade 1	Grade 2	Grade 3	Grade 4	Grade 5	Grade 6	Grade 7	Total
Land-based provision	0	0	1	1	0	0	0	2
Construction	0	2	0	0	0	0	0	2
Engineering, technology & manufacturing	0	0	0	2	0	0	0	2
Business administration, management & professional	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	1
Foundation programmes	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	1
<b>Total</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>8</b>

## LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

**Grade 2**

During the reinspection process, the inspection team identified the following strengths, weaknesses and other improvements needed:

### STRENGTHS

- good strategic planning and implementation
- good internal communications
- particularly effective strategies for improving retention rates
- good promotion of equality of opportunity

### WEAKNESSES

- insufficient monitoring of subcontractors

### OTHER IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED

- further develop quality assurance arrangements

2. There is good strategic planning and implementation at Metropolitan Training. This strength was also identified at the original inspection. Senior managers have a good understanding of the key strengths and weaknesses of the organisation and work well to improve the learners' experience. The annual business plan produced after the original inspection in August 2001, was agreed by the senior managers and contained a review of the previous year's performance and the strategic priorities for 2002-03. It includes seven business objectives, each accompanied by an action plan for its implementation. The plan is detailed and tackles the key weaknesses identified at the original inspection. Timescales and personnel responsible for each action point are identified. Achievement of the action plan is monitored at monthly senior management meetings.

3. Internal communications are good, a strength identified at the original inspection. A well-established meetings' schedule allows effective sharing of information and consultation between staff. All members of staff receive the minutes of the monthly managers' meetings. Any important issues arising from the minutes are discussed at the monthly team meetings. General staff meetings are held twice annually. All staff have a good understanding of their roles and responsibilities and work to a clear management framework.

4. Metropolitan Training has developed a retention and achievement strategy to improve poor retention rates and to raise achievement rates. The policy focuses particularly on developing effective procedures for initial assessment, induction, and progress reviews to ensure that learners are on the right learning programme. At the original inspection, retention rates were poor in most areas of learning. Retention rates are now improving and are satisfactory in all areas of learning. Achievement rates

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remain low but current learners are making good progress towards completion of their framework.

5. The staff review process is satisfactory. This was a strength at the original inspection. All staff have an annual training and development review which focuses on their performance in the preceding year and identifies training needs. These reviews are conducted by line managers who pass on the records to the operations manager who scrutinises and approves the training plans. The performance of training staff in training sessions does not currently form part of this review process.

6. There is good management of arrangements for supporting learners' basic skills. All learners receive a thorough initial assessment as well as a diagnostic basic skills assessment at the beginning of their learning programme. Learners identified as requiring additional support are helped by the provider's staff who maintain a log of the progress made by the learner.

7. Metropolitan Training has developed a policy on health and safety, which is reviewed annually. Risk assessments are carried out effectively by appropriately qualified staff. There are comprehensive policies in place for equality of opportunity, which covers gender, ethnicity, disability, age, and sexual orientation. An anti-bullying and anti-harassment policy was revised and implemented in January 2003.

**Equality of opportunity****Contributory grade 2**

8. There is good promotion of equality of opportunity. This strength was not evident at the original inspection. All learners now receive a comprehensive introduction to equality of opportunity during their induction. Induction is staged over a four-week period during which equal opportunities issues are reinforced. Training and employment officers discuss equality of opportunity issues with learners during their progress reviews. These discussions are recorded and action points are identified. Staff respond promptly to concerns and problems raised by learners at reviews. Learners who require pastoral support are helped by training and employment officers. A pastoral log is opened for these learners which records and plans the additional support required.

9. Insufficient staff training in equal opportunities was identified as a weakness at the original inspection. This weakness has been satisfactorily rectified. Equal opportunities training for new staff is covered comprehensively during induction and many staff have attended training courses in equality and diversity which are run by Wigan Council. Staff have a good understanding of equal opportunities and adhere well to the relevant policies throughout their work.

10. The company recruits many of its learners from areas of relatively high deprivation. For example, two-thirds of advanced modern apprentices in hairdressing, and 46 per cent of advanced modern apprentices in business administration have been recruited from deprived wards in Wigan.

11. Although access for people with restricted mobility to providers' sites is satisfactory, there is unsatisfactory access at one site.

**Quality assurance**

**Contributory grade 3**

12. Quality assurance arrangements are satisfactory. There is a quality assurance manual which is understood by staff. It covers procedures for the quality assurance of learning programme files, self-assessment, recruitment and selection of learners and employers, initial assessment, and induction. Feedback from learners is collected through a questionnaire which they receive after eight weeks on their learning programme and then after every six months. Employers' views are collected every six months. The results of these questionnaires are collated and discussed with staff and appropriate action plans produced.

13. There is insufficient monitoring of subcontractors. More specifically, Metropolitan Training does not monitor the training carried out by a local college of further education with which it subcontracts. Instead it relies on the subcontractor's records of observation of learning. These records have only recently been made available to Metropolitan Training. Staff at the subcontractor do not carry out on-the-job assessment in construction and the company has been unable to ensure that the subcontractor does this. Service level agreements are in place and the procedures for monitoring health and safety at subcontractors are satisfactory.

14. Insufficient evaluation of training was identified as a weakness. At reinspection, this weakness has been rectified. However, there are under-developed arrangements for the quality assurance of training. The provider established a system for the observation of training sessions in January 2003. All training staff are now observed at least once a year by a member of staff who has been trained for this role. In addition the provider appointed an external consultant to carry out some observations. Training and development needs arising from these observations are identified and action plans are produced. The documentation used for recording observations is currently being piloted and it is too early to judge whether this initiative has had a positive impact on the learner.

15. The self-assessment report is a thorough and self-critical document. All key staff were involved in producing the report and in contributing to the associated development plans. The self-assessment report accurately identifies many of the key strengths and weaknesses identified at inspection. The provider correctly graded its provision in the areas of learning with the exception of foundation programmes where inspectors gave a higher grade. Inspectors also give a higher grade for leadership and management.

16. At the original inspection, internal verification was a weakness. The provider has tackled this effectively and arrangements for internal verification are now satisfactory.

## AREAS OF LEARNING

### Land-based provision

Grade 3

Programmes inspected	Number of learners	Contributory grade
Work-based learning for young people	10	3

During the reinspection process, the inspection team identified the following strengths, weaknesses and other improvements needed:

### STRENGTHS

- good work placements
- good achievement of a wide range of additional qualifications by learners
- thorough review process

### WEAKNESSES

- poor achievement of foundation modern apprenticeship framework
- slow implementation of internal verification procedures
- weak integration of key skills with vocational training

### OTHER IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED

- more involvement from learners during induction

17. Work placements are good. A wide range of work placements enables learners to develop the full range of skills required for their NVQ. For example, the fence erection learners work in teams run by Metropolitan Training or by local companies carrying out commercial fencing contracts on local authority housing and regeneration projects. They receive good on-the-job training from well-qualified and experienced instructors. Most learners on the other learning programmes are employed and their work placements provide a wide range of opportunities for training and assessment. Employers provide good learner support, including help with collecting evidence and portfolio-building. Metropolitan Training has recently introduced an intermediate labour market scheme whereby learners are waged for the last six months of their learning programme. This has increased learners' commitment to the programme and is one of the strategies that Metropolitan Training introduced to help improve retention. Since the initial inspection, Metropolitan Training has improved the co-ordination of the on- and off-the-job training. All work providers now receive a scheme of work for the off-the-job training that they use to help them with their training in the workplace.

18. There is good achievement of a wide range of additional qualifications by

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Metropolitan Training's learners. This strength was not identified at the initial inspection. Fence erection learners are able to take short certificate courses in areas such as first aid, basic health and safety, manual handling, safe use of strimmers, and safe use of plate compactors. All of these are additional to the framework requirements and are offered to the learners at no expense to them. All of these additional qualifications improve learners' employability. If any learner has a particular requirement for a short training course that is specific to their work placement, Metropolitan Training will make every effort to satisfy the training need.

19. The review process is very thorough. Progress reviews now take place every six weeks. The management information system is used well to ensure that all reviews take place. Reviewers use a standard system and paperwork that covers all aspects of the learner's progress. The review includes contributions from the employer or workplace supervisor, who is usually present at the review. It also includes written evidence from off-the-job training. Health and safety and equal opportunities issues are reinforced and any problems in these areas are explored thoroughly. The review includes monitoring action points from the last review and any incomplete actions are brought forward. Targets for training and assessment are set and assessment is planned. Target-setting was identified as inadequate at the original inspection, but has been improved and is now satisfactory. Most targets are short term and are achievable.

20. Achievement of the foundation modern apprenticeships is poor. To date, no learner has achieved the full framework. Low retention and achievement rates were identified as weaknesses at the original inspection. The provider has put in place a number of strategies to improve these, such as improved initial assessment and additional support, and retention and achievement of NVQs has improved. There are low numbers of learners on all of these programmes and accurate comparison is not possible. Currently, there are eight learners following the foundation modern apprenticeship framework and most of these are on target to achieve the qualification.

21. Poor assessment practice was identified as a weakness at the original inspection. New systems have been introduced and assessment practice is now satisfactory. The new internal verification procedures introduced across the company have not yet been fully implemented in land-based provision. Problems with validity of evidence that were identified by the external verifier have been rectified. Changes in personnel have included the very recent appointment of a new internal verifier. Although the implementation has been slow, there has not been a significant detrimental effect on the learners and learners are continuing to make good progress.

22. Slow progress towards key skills was identified as a weakness at the original inspection. Although the planning of key skills teaching and assessment has improved, there is weak integration of this with the vocational training. New assignments and other materials are being produced but a lot of materials are still being used which are more relevant to other areas of learning. Information technology (IT) training is not being taught on a regular and structured basis though the provider has recently put plans in place to carry this out.

23. The provision of basic skills was identified as a weakness at the original inspection. There is now a new initial assessment system for basic skills support for learners' literacy, numeracy and language needs. All learners now have a basic skills assessment and a diagnostic assessment. An occupational aptitude test for learners to complete before starting the learning programme has also been introduced. Initial assessment identifies additional learning and social needs and these are arranged as soon as training starts. The training carries on for as long as required for the individual learner. Most learners take full advantage of the support and many study for higher level qualifications.

24. Although the induction for learners is comprehensive, there are long periods when the tutor is explaining details to the learners. The induction handouts are good but there are long periods of inactivity for learners. Insufficient consideration is given to increasing learners' activity during induction to ensure better concentration and understanding.

25. The most recent self-assessment report for this area is accurate. It identified all of the strengths and weakness identified at inspection although inspectors identified one other weakness.

#### Good Practice

*During a progress review a learner identified a NVQ unit that he thought he was ready to be assessed in. The employer immediately identified when this would happen. The reviewer contacted the assessor to arrange for an assessment plan to be agreed during the intervening off-the-job training session, and for the assessment to take place. All of the necessary arrangements were made on the same day.*

**Construction****Grade 3**

Programmes inspected	Number of learners	Contributory grade
Work-based learning for young people	136	3

During the reinspection process, the inspection team identified the following strengths, weaknesses and other improvements needed:

**STRENGTHS**

- outstanding learner support
- good work placements
- good retention rates for foundation and modern apprentices

**WEAKNESSES**

- low achievement rates
- inadequate work-based assessment by subcontractor

**OTHER IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED**

- better resources at training centre for carpentry and joinery
- clearer short-term targets during progress reviews

26. Learner support is outstanding. Most learners have additional social and/or learning needs. At the start of their learning programme, many learners beginning these programmes are disaffected school leavers with few or no previous qualifications. All learners receive outstanding additional support from training and work-placement staff at the training centre. Staff meet regularly with learners to discuss and resolve any issues or concerns. Minutes of these meetings are routinely given to senior officers for action. These actions are always followed up. As a result of these meetings, significant improvements have been made to the providers' welfare facilities. Training and work-placement staff work closely with learners to identify employment opportunities. All learners are found relevant employment, which often results from a period of work experience. All learners are visited at work every six weeks by work-placement officers to review their progress and to discuss any pastoral issues. One learner at the start of his learning programme could not read, write or deal with numerical problems. This learner has had significant support over a three-year period and has made significant progress. Most staff are appropriately experienced. Attendance at support sessions is logged in learners' portfolios, with details of achievement and progress recorded in the log sheets. This helps learners to identify their progress. Staff can be contacted on mobile telephone numbers, which are given to all learners. Where additional learning or social

needs have been identified during initial assessment, learning support is given a high priority. Staff frequently give support on housing and social issues as well as personal problems. Retention of learners is improving. In 2000, 48 per cent of the learners who started the NVQ level 1 programme left in the first 10 weeks. In 2001, this figure was reduced to 30 per cent and in 2002, only 17 per cent left the programme early. In the current year, all learners have been retained. Employers are very supportive and provide learners with a wide range of work tasks to achieve their qualification.

27. Work placements are good. Learners gain experience on a wide variety of commercial and domestic projects, including national house builders, small construction companies and local authorities. Learners work alongside experienced tradespeople and are expected to work to challenging targets. Many employers have long-standing working relationships with the provider. Many former learners are now full-time employees with these employers. This opportunity for employment helps motivate learners who are currently on the learning programme to achieve their target qualification. Employers and workplace supervisors have a good understanding of the requirements of the framework, and work well to help them gain and develop the required practical skills. This enhances off-the-job training and enables good assessment to take place. Unemployed learners work on a variety of projects including work on listed buildings and restoration of a bandstand in Wigan Park. Portfolios of evidence contain a wide variety of evidence from the workplace. This evidence includes photographs, witness statements and copies of drawings. The provider has facilitated workshops and briefings for employers. These sessions focus on the requirements of the NVQ and the role of the employer in the NVQ process. Many employers and workplace supervisors are able to act as work-based recorders. This helps to provide the necessary workplace evidence required by the qualification. The co-ordination of on- and off-the job training has improved. This was identified as a weakness at the original inspection.

28. Achievement rates are low, but some improvement has occurred. At the original inspection only 14 per cent of learners achieved their NVQ at level 1 and no learners achieved their NVQ at levels 2 or 3. However, at reinspection, 30 per cent of the advanced modern apprentices have achieved their NVQ, and 50 per cent are still in learning. For foundation modern apprentices the achievement rate is 17 per cent, and 28 per cent are still in learning. Retention on both programmes is now good, with most learners on target to complete the full framework.

29. Most of the learners who attend a local subcontractor college for their off-the-job training do not receive any on-site assessment from the subcontractor. For example, one plumbing learner following a foundation modern apprenticeship has been on programme for 10 months and has not received any work-based assessments. He has completed the installation of hot and cold water systems, heating installations, and has completed underground drainage and rain water systems. His planned completion date is two years after starting the programme, but he has adequate work experience to achieve the qualification much sooner. This is currently not possible as the work-based assessment by the subcontractor is inadequate for his needs.

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30. Progress reviews are satisfactory and include discussion on issues such as health and safety, equal opportunities, progress, and action-planning. Metropolitan Training's staff carry out the review effectively and make every effort to involve employers, training staff and the learner. Although some important action-planning is identified and recorded, the reviews do not always make best use of workplace activities to set short-term targets for achievement. For example, learners are carrying out demanding work with employers. This is rarely used to set similar targets for the next review, to inform assessment decisions.

31. Following the original inspection, improvements have been carried out in most areas of the training centre. Classrooms and study areas are now well stocked with a wide variety of learning materials. Computer presentations are now used regularly for background knowledge training. Some very good handouts and text materials are used. However, resources in carpentry and joinery are old and poorly maintained. Training in plastering is now satisfactory. An assessor is now accredited to assess this qualification and additional training staff are in place. Health and safety monitoring was poor at the original inspection. There have been significant improvements in the management and implementation of health and safety requirements. A health and safety specialist has been appointed. Training is provided to all relevant staff who are now carrying out regular monitoring of health and safety requirements. All work placements undergo an extensive health and safety appraisal and employers are contracted to comply with all requirements. Health and safety awareness training takes a high priority in all learning programmes and all issues are systematically reinforced with learners during progress reviews. All work placements are risk banded and monitored according to the degree of risk involved. The integration of key skills training and assessment with the rest of the training is now being implemented. A key skills team leader co-ordinates the teaching of key skills training and assessment. Staff have developed occupationally specific assignments. These assignments use evidence from the NVQ for key skills assessment. For example, progress reviews carried out with learners are used as evidence towards achievement of the communications key skills unit. Also calculations for quantities of materials are used towards achievement of application of number.

**Engineering, technology & manufacturing****Grade 3**

Programmes inspected	Number of learners	Contributory grade
Work-based learning for young people	29	3

During the reinspection process, the inspection team identified the following strengths, weaknesses and other improvements needed:

**STRENGTHS**

- very good learner support
- thorough review process
- good work placements

**WEAKNESSES**

- poor achievement on foundation and advanced modern apprenticeship programmes

**OTHER IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED**

- better progression opportunities for level one motor vehicle full-time learners.

32. There is very good personal and occupational support available for learners from employers and Metropolitan Training's staff. Assessors frequently give advice and support in issues such as housing, transportation and other social issues that affect the learner. Basic skills training is good. All learners with additional support needs have access to the provider's development unit at which all learners now attend regular jobsearch guidance sessions. Since the original inspection, learners have been given better access to computers, the intranet, and a range of newspapers and magazines. Employers now have a better awareness of NVQ programmes and support learners' training needs. For example, one learner was moved to another part of a company so that skills in electrical installation work could be tested. Some learners have driving lessons paid for by their employers. Assessors have good working relationships with employers and learners. Assessors have consulted with employers and identified training which can be carried out in the workplace. This enables training co-ordination to take place between the workplace and the college. Some workplace supervisors request information on the content of college programmes to enable them to help with learners' training. A recent move to new premises prompted one employer to contact Metropolitan Training for advice on health and safety and risk assessment. Assessors make frequent visits to the workplace and progress reviews are carried out every six weeks.

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33. The review process is thorough. Some workplace supervisors take an active role in the review process and willingly discuss the content of the review with the assessor and the learner. Some supervisors choose not to be directly involved in the review process. However, assessors do discuss learners' progress with them. The review document is completed thoroughly and realistic action plans are drawn up. Good discussion about the learner's progress takes place. Equal opportunities issues are discussed and learners fully understand equality of opportunity issues and grievance procedures. Achievement of short-term goals is monitored at each review, and reference is made to previous reviews. Learning plans are kept up to date. Assessors help learners in compiling their portfolios and with the cross referencing of evidence. Assessment practice is now improved and comprehensive documentation is completed. Feedback to learners is good, and includes discussion on portfolio work.

34. Work placements are good and provide a wide range of training opportunities, allowing learners to choose which NVQ units they wish to take as part of their learning programme. Resources are good in the subcontracting college and in the workplace. Learners acquire a wide range of skills through the use of technical modern machinery and a comprehensive range of tooling and equipment. Some employers provide additional training to supplement learners' knowledge and many learners have training in the use of specialist equipment. The training centre is satisfactory for learners working towards NVQs at level 1. Motor vehicle staff have produced a full set of good schemes of work, lesson plans and learners' course booklets for the NVQ level 1.

35. Achievement data for advanced modern apprenticeships for the period 1999-2000 show that no frameworks were completed, although two learners are still in training. In 2000-01, 46 per cent of learners have completed the framework with four learners still in training. Recent measures have been introduced to improve learners' retention rates and achievement rates. Metropolitan Training now has a retention and achievement strategy in place. Learners' reviews are now very detailed and focus on the learner's needs. Assessment and internal verification systems are now effective. Support and guidance is good. No learner on a modern apprenticeship programme has left early in the past two years. Learners make good progress in their studies at the college. Recently, monthly meetings with Metropolitan Training's staff and college staff have taken place. These meetings discuss all aspects of the modern apprentices' curriculum, including progress made by individual learners. The original inspection highlighted key skills as an area for concern. The college has recently started to focus on the integration of key skills training and assessment into the curriculum. It has designed integrated assignments which can be completed either in the workplace or at the college, or through a combination of both. Learners' progress is now better, and learners are beginning to complete their modern apprenticeship framework. There has been no completion of foundation modern apprenticeship frameworks in the period 1999-2003. However, five framework portfolios have just been completed by foundation modern apprentices. NVQ programme achievements are below acceptable levels for the period 2000-01. Retention is satisfactory.

36. Quality assurance audits are carried out monthly on learners' files by trainers and a

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quality assurance co-ordinator is responsible for monitoring the recruitment and selection process, employer and learner questionnaires, and on-and off-the-job training records, as well as visiting employers and learners in the workplace. Monthly meetings of the quality assurance group ensure compliance with the company's directives.

**Business administration, management & professional****Grade 3**

Programmes inspected	Number of learners	Contributory grade
Work-based learning for young people	77	3

During the reinspection process, the inspection team identified the following strengths, weaknesses and other improvements needed:

**STRENGTHS**

- very effective initial assessment
- good work placements
- good off-the-job training

**WEAKNESSES**

- low achievement rates for advanced modern apprentices
- some inappropriate job roles for learners working towards NVQs at level 3

**OTHER IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED**

- better knowledge and understanding of technical certificates by staff

37. The initial assessment process is used effectively to identify learners' additional support needs and to ensure that they are on an appropriate learning programme. This strength was partly identified in the self-assessment report. Since the original inspection, the initial assessment process has been strengthened by the appointment of a dedicated member of staff responsible for administering and marking the set tests. Initial assessment is carried out over two days using nationally recognised basic skills and key skills test materials. All learners are also interviewed to further confirm their understanding of, and interest in, administration as a chosen career path. Initial assessment is regarded by management as an important part of a strategy to improve retention rates. Close monitoring of learners recently recruited and comparison with data from earlier years indicates that the number of learners leaving in the first 10 weeks has declined by 50 per cent.

38. Work placements are good and enable learners to progress towards their target qualification, and to develop personal and social skills through work roles that require them to assume responsibilities and to contribute to team objectives. This strength was not recognised in the self-assessment report. In addition to attending progress reviews, workplace supervisors liaise with training staff in identifying areas of the learner's work role which are needed to satisfy the evidence requirements of the NVQ. The supervisors support learners in attending in-house training courses relevant to the NVQ

qualification. One learner, for example, was offered additional in-house training in IT. Staff from work placements have also attended employer forum meetings organised by Metropolitan Training to improve employers' knowledge and understanding of the NVQ process. A significant number of learners are offered permanent posts in local council departments.

39. At the original inspection off-the-job training was poor. At reinspection, off-the-job training is good. All learners now attend the training centre for one day each fortnight for off-the-job training. This training is tailored to meet the needs of learners identified by training staff during visits to the learners in the workplace. Some training is provided on an individual basis by training staff. Other training is provided in more formal sessions which are structured and led by a member of the training staff. For example, one session focused on hazards and risks in the workplace, and enabled learners to share their experiences of hazards and risks with other learners, and to gain an understanding of their responsibilities and rights under health and safety legislation in the workplace. Training staff have developed materials which support learners' understanding of all NVQ units.

40. Literacy, numeracy and language support is satisfactory. Additional learning needs are identified as part of the initial assessment process, and structured support is provided by a member of staff with a responsibility for additional support needs.

41. Internal verification was judged to be poor in the original report. A revised internal verification system has been implemented and internal verification is now satisfactory. The system includes a clear sampling plan and arrangements for the observation of all assessors by an internal verifier. Written feedback is provided from all verification activities, and internal verifiers meet with assessors each month to identify and share good practice and to monitor the implementation of the system.

42. Satisfactory progress is being made in the provision and assessment of key skills. This was identified as a weakness in the original inspection. All staff have had key skills training and there is evidence from learners' portfolios that targets for assessment include key skills. Off-the-job training also includes key skills training and assessment.

43. Insufficient assessment in the workplace was identified as a weakness at the original inspection. This is now satisfactory. Work-based assessors regularly observe learners and assess product evidence and witness testimony provided by employers' staff. Observed assessments are recorded fully and a written copy of the observation, referenced to the appropriate NVQ unit or element, is placed in the learners' portfolio.

44. At the original inspection, retention and achievement rates were poor. At reinspection, achievement rates are low for advanced modern apprentices. Management strategies to tackle this weakness include close monitoring of learners' progress and performance, more detailed interviews to assess learners' commitment to, and interest in, employment in administration, and increased resources to improve the effectiveness of initial assessment. Achievement has improved, and learners are making

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satisfactory progress. Completion of frameworks for 2000-01 was 21 per cent. In 2001-02, none were completed. Retention and achievement rates are satisfactory on foundation modern apprenticeship frameworks and NVQ programmes. In 2000-01, the retention rate for the foundation modern apprenticeship was 61 per cent, and the achievement rate 47 per cent.

45. Some learners on advanced modern apprenticeships are employed in job roles which do not allow them to collect appropriate evidence for the level 3 NVQ in administration. Although their jobs include varied administrative duties and responsibilities, they do not provide them with the supervisory experience appropriate to this level of NVQ. This was identified as a weakness at the original inspection. However, the self-assessment report correctly identified the progress Metropolitan Training has made since the original inspection.

**Hairdressing & beauty therapy****Grade 3**

Programmes inspected	Number of learners	Contributory grade
Work-based learning for young people	21	3

During the reinspection process, the inspection team identified the following strengths, weaknesses and other improvements needed:

**STRENGTHS**

- very good learner support
- very effective progress reviews
- excellent training resources

**WEAKNESSES**

- low achievement rates

**OTHER IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED**

- better co-ordination of on- and off-the job training
- more work-based assessment

46. There is very good learner support. This was identified as a strength at the original inspection. All learners are supported effectively throughout their training. There is a wide range of diagnostic tools and screening tests to identify learners' individual needs. These include a thorough occupational skills assessment to determine learners' suitability for hairdressing as an occupation. The results from the tests are shared with both the learner and the college. Learners with additional needs have a support plan and a named support person. Support for additional needs is carried out both off the job and at work where necessary. The support develops learners' literacy and numeracy skills. Pastoral support for learners is also good.

47. Reviews of learners' progress are good. They are carried out in the workplace and involve both the learner and the employer. Participants in the review meeting contribute effectively to the review targets and receive a copy of them. The targets set during the previous review are monitored in subsequent reviews. Learners and employers use the review targets to review and make progress with work-based learning. The targets focus on both the NVQ and key skills. Progress off the job is also covered during the review. Targets are challenging but achievable. Individual learning plans are updated as part of the review process. Coverage of equality of opportunity and health and safety matters during reviews is very good. There is standardised testing of learners' understanding of these issues during all reviews. All learners are reviewed at

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work every six weeks.

48. The salons used by learners are good with excellent training resources. They are well resourced and enable learners to develop a wide range of skills. All employers offer training to learners at work. Most learners are also able to take additional training with product manufacturers to improve their skills. The college salons used for off-the-job training are of a very good commercial standard.

49. Metropolitan Training has made significant progress towards tackling the weaknesses identified at the original inspection. The staff at Metropolitan Training have been very self-critical and made significant changes to the learning programmes. For example, an occupational initial assessment has been introduced to ensure that learners are placed onto appropriate learning programmes. There has been a significant increase in the amount of work-based assessment available to all learners. Learners are making good progress towards achievement of full NVQ units.

50. Achievement rates are low. Since 1999, only five out of 21 advanced modern apprentices have achieved both their NVQ and key skills. Learners who have not yet completed their full framework now benefit from work-based assessment and are making good progress. The number of foundation modern apprentices achieving both their NVQ and key skills was very good in 1999 when 80 per cent achieved the full modern apprenticeship framework. In 2000, the number of foundation modern apprentices was too low to make a judgement about their achievements. Of 17 starters in 2001, only five achieved the full framework. Three are still in learning and are making good progress.

51. In 1999, 85 per cent of foundation modern apprentices stayed in training. In 2000, there were only two starters who both stayed in training. Of 17 starters in 2001, nine were retained and three are still in training. These three are on target to achieve both the NVQ and key skills. Of 14 starters in 2002, ten are still in training. Metropolitan Training keeps detailed records and analysis of all leavers' destinations.

52. Co-ordination of on- and off-the-job training is satisfactory. This was identified as a weakness at the original inspection. There has been a lot of work to improve this. A file for employers has been recently issued to all employers, however, some employers have not read it. It has not yet had sufficient impact on improving co-ordination of both training on and off the job. There are more frequent work-based assessments, improved communications, and greater involvement by employers. Employers' evenings have been offered at the college, but these have been poorly attended. However, a newsletter is now sent to all employers to keep them informed of employers' evening events. Most employers are not aware of the learners' entitlement to key skills or the progress that learners are making towards achieving them. Learners have a good understanding of their target qualifications.

53. The original inspection identified insufficient assessment at work as a weakness. This is now satisfactory. The Metropolitan Training assessor now carries out assessments

at work. All learners now have work-based assessments. There are not enough work-based assessments for learners who spend most of their time in the workplace. One employer has recently started to assess an NVQ learner at work. Metropolitan Training staff support the new assessor. Two other qualified work-based assessors are not yet assessing the learners at work.

54. Internal verification of assessment practice is satisfactory. Assessment practice is standardised and meets awarding body requirements.

**Health, social care & public services****Grade 3**

Programmes inspected	Number of learners	Contributory grade
Work-based learning for young people	22	3

During the reinspection process, the inspection team identified the following strengths, weaknesses and other improvements needed:

**STRENGTHS**

- well-structured on- and off-the job training
- thorough review system

**WEAKNESSES**

- insufficient off-the-job training for learners on NVQ housing programme

**OTHER IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED**

- better use of unit accreditation

55. On- and off-the-job training is good. Learners attend the training centre one day every two weeks. During these sessions the learners collect evidence for their NVQ units. On alternate weeks they work towards their key skills. Trainers work effectively to ensure that key skills training and assessment are fully integrated with the NVQ units and motivate learners towards completion. On-the-job training is good. Learners work alongside appropriately qualified staff, and they have good opportunities to develop practical skills through demonstration of tasks and practical activities. Assessment is carried out in the workplace and a good range of evidence is used. Learners understand the methods used to collect evidence. Good support is provided during off-the-job training sessions to help learners develop their portfolios. Good use is made of unit accreditation on the care and early years programmes

56. The review system is thorough. Staff visit learners in the workplace every four to six weeks to carry out progress reviews. The review system is effective, identifying training needs, short-term targets and tackling health and safety, and equal opportunities issues. Learners, employers and provider staff are all involved in the progress reviews and a formal report is completed and copied to the learner and employer. This is very effective in supporting the learners towards NVQ unit and key skills completion. Learners have a good understanding of equal opportunities. Staff set appropriate tasks to help learners develop their knowledge and understanding of relevant issues. Good working relationships exist between learners, employers, trainers and assessors, and effectively meet the pastoral needs of the learners.

57. Achievement on the foundation modern apprenticeship in 2000 was low at 37 per cent. Some learners are expected to achieve it after their planned completion date. However, there is an improvement in the retention of foundation modern apprentices in 2002 intake which is currently 82 per cent. There is sufficient evidence in learners' portfolios to identify their progress. Progress on all training programmes has improved. All learners are making satisfactory progress towards NVQ unit completion. This is particularly so for learners on care programmes. Initial assessment is used to identify additional learning needs. Since the original inspection, basic skills testing has been introduced that identifies effectively their individual learning needs.

58. Metropolitan Training became an approved centre for NVQ housing awards in 2002. Twelve learners have been recruited to work towards this award, and it is planned to increase the numbers of learners when they have completed their training. Learners gain good experience in the workplace and work alongside qualified staff. In some workplaces the learners have access to work-based assessors. However, insufficient time is allocated to off-the-job training for this programme. At present, learners only attend the training centre for one day each month. This does not provide sufficient time to reinforce or develop knowledge-based evidence. Employers do not receive sufficient information about off-the-job training sessions and are unable to expand and develop the application of learners' background knowledge training in the workplace. There is not enough access to resources such as textbooks.

59. Arrangements for meeting learners' basic skills are satisfactory. There is a comprehensive initial assessment as well as a diagnostic assessment at the beginning of the programme for all learners. Learners identified as requiring additional support are helped by an appropriate member of staff.

60. Currently there are five staff working towards assessor awards and they are making good progress. A satisfactory system of internal verification is now in place and regular standardisation meetings are held. The monitoring system is satisfactory but does not allow for a clear indication of the progress made towards unit completion within the planned duration. Some learners make progress towards unit completion. Some learners who leave the programme early have no units accredited.

#### Good Practice

*One learner has been involved in developing a system of monitoring building repairs. This has been accepted by the estate managers and incorporated into the housing system. The learner has been awarded a £20 reward for her idea.*

**Foundation programmes****Grade 2**

Programmes inspected	Number of learners	Contributory grade
Work-based learning for young people	5	2

During the reinspection process, the inspection team identified the following strengths, weaknesses and other improvements needed:

**STRENGTHS**

- strong links with external agencies
- good use of practical activities to develop learners' social skills
- very effective personal support
- good work experience placements

**WEAKNESSES**

- insufficient planning of learners' individual learning programme
- ineffective progress reviews

61. Links with external agencies are strong. Good links exist with Connexions and the probation service. Meetings regularly take place between these agencies, the learner and their tutors to discuss progress and tackle relevant issues. Learners are provided with information sessions by a range of external agencies. These sessions cover the dangers of drugs, fire safety, first aid, independent living and sexual health. Links with housing and independent living agencies are used effectively to ensure that learners are safely housed and can live independently.

62. There is good use of practical activities to develop learners' social skills. There is a range of teambuilding activities that develop learners' communication skills. For example, learners attend well-structured outdoor teambuilding activities, such as rock climbing and orienteering. Learners are involved in the planning of these activities and develop skills in planning. They also acquire numeracy skills by budgeting the exercise and research techniques. Learners practise their literacy skills effectively by confirming bookings in writing. Learners receive effective literacy and numeracy support at the training centre on either an individual basis or in small groups. Learners receive a comprehensive initial assessment including a basic skills diagnostic assessment and thorough discussion with the provider. Literacy and numeracy support is satisfactory. This is based on the individual needs of the learner as identified by initial assessment. Where possible, this is linked to the occupational area in which the learner is interested. There is a variety of resources to support learning including CD-ROMs, textbooks, videos, and comprehensive handouts.

63. Personal support for learners is very effective. Staff work well with the learners and regularly check that learners are not experiencing any difficulties. Learners are highly motivated. Learner groups are small and learners receive good support within teaching sessions. Practical support is provided to assist learners with interviews including the provision of ironing facilities, a selection of interview clothes and access to toiletries. Learners also receive a weekly bus pass to attend training, work experience and to travel outside of programme hours for social purposes.

64. Work experience placements are good. There are a wide variety of work experience placements including carpentry and joinery, bricklaying, hairdressing, retailing and fencing. Employers provide good learner support and work very closely with learners to help them achieve their goals. Work experience is well planned. Successful achievement of work experience activities is recorded.

65. Retention and achievement on the Life Skills programme is satisfactory. Learners have significant barriers to learning and employment. Many have been excluded from, or dropped out of, school and some have criminal records and behavioural problems. Some learners have drug and alcohol problems. Retention was 42 per cent in 2000-01 and 33 per cent in 2001-02. Retention has improved and is currently 54 per cent with 8 per cent of learners still in training. Many changes have been made since the interim reinspection monitoring visit in March 2003, including the introduction of small group sizes providing more individual support for learners. Basic skills provision has much improved and learning sessions are now managed effectively. Data calculated annually in previous years were not always accurate but this has now been rectified.

66. In 2000-01, 22 per cent of learners entered employment. In 2001-02 this was 17 per cent. In the current year 20 per cent have entered employment. Much work has taken place to encourage learners to move into education and training after Life Skills. Currently 16 per cent of learners have taken up this option. Eight per cent of learners are still in learning. Learners are making satisfactory progress towards their goals and learners' work is good.

67. There is insufficient planning of the learners' individual learning programmes. A new individual learning plan has recently been introduced. This lists the modules that learners are working towards, and the expected achievement dates, but there is no breakdown of these overall modules. When a learner attends a module, the achievement date is entered but this does not necessarily mean that the learner is competent in this area. The learning plan is insufficiently detailed and the modules are not broken down into clear, measurable steps. There is no training plan for learners' basic skills or personal skills development. Work experience activities are well planned.

68. Progress reviews are ineffective. There is insufficient evaluation of learner's progress and comments are often descriptive. There are no clear, measurable targets set or reviewed. Learning plans are not used in the review process. Reviews are carried out at least every two weeks, but they are not effective in measuring progress over a period of time. There is no effective mechanism for recording feedback from other tutors on

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learners' progress. The review document used does not include a section for target-setting or review against personal targets. Learners have a satisfactory understanding of key induction topics including health and safety and equal opportunities, but this understanding is not reinforced at review. Employers do not formally participate in the review process.