

INSPECTION REPORT

McArthur Dean Training Limited

08 May 2001



ADULT LEARNING
INSPECTORATE

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 and in New Deal options. 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 *learnirect* provision
- adult and community learning
- training given by the Employment Service under the New Deals.

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.

Inadequate provision

A provider's provision will normally be deemed to be less than adequate where

- one third or more of published grades for occupational/curriculum areas and New Deal options are judged less than satisfactory, or
- leadership and management are judged to be less than satisfactory

The final decision as to whether the provision is inadequate rests with the Chief Inspector of Adult Learning. The overall judgement as to whether the provision is adequate or inadequate is included in the summary section of the inspection report.

SUMMARY

The provider

McArthur Dean Training Limited is a private training organisation, based in the centre of Kingston-upon-Hull. It provides training mainly in administration and accounting. Currently, there are 112 modern apprentices. Trainees are employed by local organisations, including estate agencies, solicitors, accountants and the local council.

Overall judgement

The quality of the provision is not adequate to meet the reasonable needs of those receiving it. Although the training in business administration is satisfactory, the leadership and management of McArthur Dean Training Limited is unsatisfactory.

Work-based learning for young people

Work-based learning for young people is satisfactory. The company trains 107 foundation and advanced modern apprentices in business administration. The proportion of trainees who complete their modern apprenticeship is low, at 17 per cent. There are inadequate staff resources. Support for trainees is good, with frequent training sessions. The company finds good jobs for its trainees with local employers. Some trainees undertake useful additional qualifications.

Leadership and management

The leadership and management of McArthur Dean Training Limited is unsatisfactory. The company provides a good learning environment and has a successful strategy to promote work-based learning to employers. Overall, arrangements to ensure equality of opportunity are satisfactory. However, there is no comprehensive framework for quality assurance. Management of key skills training is weak and there is insufficient staff development and training. Arrangements for monitoring health and safety in the workplace are unsatisfactory.

GRADES

Business administration	3
Contributory grades:	
Work-based learning for young people	3

Leadership and management	4
Contributory grades:	
Equality of opportunity	3
Quality assurance	4

KEY STRENGTHS

- good awareness of equal opportunities among trainees
- good learning environment
- effective links with local employers

KEY WEAKNESSES

- no overall framework for quality assurance
- inadequate monitoring of health and safety in the workplace
- weak management of training in key skills
- poor achievement rates for modern apprenticeship framework

OTHER IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED

- better-written handouts and training materials
- more detailed records of meetings

THE PROVIDER AND ITS CONTEXT

1. McArthur Dean Training Limited (McArthur Dean) was founded in 1995. It has two full-time directors and six other staff. Four further individuals work for the company on a self-employed basis. In addition to providing training, McArthur Dean also operates as a marketing agency. Training for modern apprentices is funded through a contract with Humberside's Local Learning and Skills Council (LLSC). There are trainees on both foundation modern apprenticeships and advanced modern apprenticeships. There are 107 trainees in business administration, all working towards national vocational qualifications (NVOs) in either administration or accounting, together with key skills. There are also five trainees working towards NVOs in customer service.

2. Over 70 per cent of those employed in Humberside work in manufacturing, distribution, hotels, catering, public administration, education and health. The rate at which new businesses are opening in the area is below the national average and the proportion which fail is comparatively high. Wages are typically low and a relatively high proportion of jobs are part time. The rate of unemployment in Hull is high, at 7.4 per cent, compared with the national average of 3.3 per cent for April 2001. Rates of educational achievement by school leavers in Hull are poor. The proportion of school leavers achieving five or more general certificates of secondary education (GCSEs) at grade C or above was 24.2 per cent in 2000, less than half the national average of 49.2 per cent. Approximately 1 per cent of the population in Hull is from minority ethnic groups.

THE INSPECTION

3. A team of four inspectors spent a total of 16 days at McArthur Dean during May 2001. The team was joined by an observer from the Department for Education and Skills (DfES). Training in customer service was not inspected as there were fewer than 10 trainees. Inspectors interviewed 29 trainees and conducted 17 interviews with McArthur Dean's staff. Twelve workplaces were visited and interviews were held with 12 workplace supervisors. Inspectors observed and graded five sessions of learning and observed two reviews of trainees' progress. Fifty-one individual learning plans and 19 portfolios of NVQ evidence were examined. Inspectors also examined a wide range of other documents, including the company's plans, policies, promotional literature, staff records, training materials and management information. Inspectors studied the self-assessment report, which was produced by two directors in February 2001.

Grades awarded to learning sessions

	Grade 1	Grade 2	Grade 3	Grade 4	Grade 5	Grade 6	Grade 7	Total
Business administration	0	1	0	2	2	0	0	5
Total	0	1	0	2	2	0	0	5

OCCUPATIONAL AREAS

Business administration

Grade 3

Programmes inspected	Number of learners	Contributory grade
Work-based learning for young people	107	3

4. McArthur Dean offers foundation and advanced modern apprenticeships in administration and accounting. There are currently 91 advanced modern apprentices and 14 foundation modern apprentices. These trainees are working towards NVQs at levels 2, 3 and 4. They also undertake key skills at the levels specified in their apprenticeship frameworks. Trainees can take additional qualifications, in subjects such as word processing, payroll administration and law. McArthur Dean recruits trainees directly and finds them suitable jobs or work placements. All trainees undertake an induction at the training centre, followed by a further induction into the workplace provided by the employer. Most trainees attend the training centre for half a day each week for off-the-job training sessions. When this is not possible, McArthur Dean's staff provide training in the workplace. Teaching and revision sessions are held on Saturday mornings for trainees working towards examinations in accounting. When trainees reach a level 3 NVQ, McArthur Dean gives them some off-the-job training in key skills. Trainees' progress is reviewed in the workplace every eight weeks. In administration, all NVQ assessments are carried out by McArthur Dean's staff. In accounting, there are some qualified work-based assessors. McArthur Dean has two full-time trainers and four part-time trainers for administration and accounting training. One of the assessors and a director are qualified internal verifiers. In 1998, one of McArthur Dean's directors left the company and set up as a competitor in the area. Some trainees left to join the competitor.

The achievements of trainees who have started on programmes in business administration since April 1998 are shown in the tables below.

Work-based learning for young people								
Foundation modern apprenticeships (FMA)	1997-98		1998-99		1999-2000		2000-01	
	Number	Per cent	Number	Per cent	Number	Per cent	Number	Per cent
	Number that started							10
Still in training							7	70

Work-based learning for young people								
Advanced modern apprenticeships (AMA)	1997-98		1998-99		1999-2000		2000-01	
	Number	Per cent	Number	Per cent	Number	Per cent	Number	Per cent
	Number that started	37		50		48		85
Still in training	0	0	2	4	21	44	64	75
AMA framework completed	13	35	9	18	1	2	0	0
NVQ level 2 completed	20	54	31	62	16	33	9	11
NVQ level 3 completed	17	46	16	32	9	19	2	2

STRENGTHS

- effective links with local employers
- good work placements with good career prospects
- good support for trainees

WEAKNESSES

- low rates of achievement of modern apprenticeship framework
- lack of focus and targets in reviews of trainees' progress
- inadequate staff resources

OTHER IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED

- more detailed schemes of work for training sessions
- better written handouts and training materials
- more work-based assessment

5. McArthur Dean has developed good links with local employers. It works with reputable and well-established organisations which have a strong commitment to training. Trainees are carefully matched with employers, taking full account of their interests, abilities and career aims. Most trainees secure permanent contracts of employment within the first three months of their training programme. Inductions are comprehensive and trainees have a clear understanding of their programmes, and their rights and responsibilities. Staff work closely with trainees and their employers when preparing individual learning plans.

6. In their work placements, trainees carry out an extensive range of activities and make good progress in developing competence across the range of skills required by the NVQ. Some trainees also benefit from their employers' own staff training. Employers are given full information about the training which takes place off the job and many plan

MCARTHUR DEAN TRAINING LIMITED

workplace activities to complement the training provided at the training centre. Where the NVQ requires tasks which trainees do not normally carry out at work, employers often make special arrangements to provide the necessary experience. For example, some employers provide trainees with additional experience in activities such as meeting visitors and arranging appointments.

7. Trainees receive good support, a strength identified by McArthur Dean in its self-assessment report. There is frequent contact between trainees and staff, both in the workplace and in the training centre. Staff respond quickly to requests for guidance and have an excellent rapport with trainees. Trainees can call into the training centre for one-to-one coaching, in addition to their scheduled off-the-job training sessions. They use the training centre's learning resources, including computers, for private study.

8. All applicants for training are interviewed and have their basic skills assessed. The company has recently introduced an initial assessment of key skills. McArthur Dean has made arrangements for another training provider to give additional learning support to trainees with literacy and numeracy difficulties. At the time of inspection, no trainee required this support.

9. The proportion of trainees who complete the modern apprenticeship framework is low. Overall, only 17 per cent of those who have left the programme in the past three years have successfully completed the full apprenticeship framework. However, many trainees who do not achieve the full apprenticeship framework are successful in achieving an NVQ and the additional qualifications included on their individual learning plan.

10. Progress reviews are carried out in the workplace every eight weeks. Progress reviews are designed to include the workplace supervisor and the forms for recording reviews contain a space for the workplace supervisor's comments. In practice, the workplace supervisor is not always present. Many reviews of progress are insufficiently thorough and the records of reviews are insufficiently detailed. The progress reviews lack focus, and trainees are not set specific or challenging targets.

11. In some off-the-job training sessions, activities are closely related to trainees' workplace activities and difficult concepts are taught in imaginative ways, including through role-play. However, in other sessions, trainers simply read through handouts, without checking the trainees' understanding of what is being covered. The schemes of work for training sessions lack detail, consisting only of a list of topics to be covered. Some course materials are unsatisfactory. Training staff are not adequately qualified or trained. A single member of staff is responsible for off-the-job assessments and the progress reviews of all 71 trainees in administration. The arrangements for assessment and internal verification are satisfactory, with effective planning and clear recording of both processes. However, there is little assessment in the workplace.

Poor Practice

Some learning materials and handouts contain errors in spelling and grammar. This sets a poor example to trainees, especially those required to produce well-written documents for their NVQ in administration.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

Grade 4

12. McArthur Dean has two directors. One has responsibility for training. The main responsibility of the second director is to oversee the company's activities as a marketing agency. The second director also writes the business plan and manages the overall finances of the company. In addition to the two directors, McArthur Dean employs a further six staff. The company also uses four self-employed individuals, each working for up to five hours each week. McArthur Dean's equal opportunities policy was first written in 1996 and has since been updated. There is a procedural manual covering staffing, management and training. McArthur Dean produced its first self-assessment report in 2000 and submitted its second report, in preparation for inspection, in February 2001.

STRENGTHS

- successful marketing of work-based training
- good learning environment
- high level of care taken to ensure equality of opportunity during recruitment
- good awareness of equal opportunities among trainees
- good awareness of quality issues among staff

WEAKNESSES

- insufficient staff development
- lack of recorded targets for the company and individual staff
- inadequate monitoring of health and safety in the workplace
- weak management of training in key skills
- no procedures for implementing equal opportunities policy
- no overall framework for quality assurance
- inadequate collection and analysis of data
- inadequate completion of paperwork

OTHER IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED

- more detailed recording of meetings

13. McArthur Dean successfully uses its expertise in marketing to promote work-based training to employers. It noted this strength in its self-assessment report. The business plan includes a clear marketing strategy. The company has given a high priority to increasing the number of employers with which it works. It has a business development manager, whose main role is to develop and maintain links with employers. Once links are established, the company provides a good service to employers. It responds quickly and efficiently to their requests and has developed a good reputation.

14. McArthur Dean's training premises are located in the centre of Hull and can be reached easily by public transport. Trainees attend the training centre for off-the-job learning sessions, provide study and one-to-one coaching. There is a good learning environment with a professional and welcoming atmosphere. There are well-furnished training rooms, with good facilities for computing.

15. Until one month before inspection, there were no staff appraisals. A new system has recently been introduced and each member of staff now has a personal development plan. However, there has been little staff development or training and significant needs for training have not been met. The company identified this weakness in its self-assessment report. Training staff have undertaken no qualifications or training to develop the necessary skills for their role. They do, however, hold assessors and internal verifiers' awards. Staff files contain no records of training undertaken. There is no overall plan for staff development, linked to the business plan.

16. There is a lack of recorded targets for the company as a whole, for individual learning programmes and for individual staff. There are targets for recruiting trainees, but there are none relating to rates of retention and achievement. Staff appraisals are not used to set specific, measurable and achievable targets. The company does, however, have an effective system to monitor trainees' progress and the dates when they are expected to complete their training.

17. Arrangements for ensuring health and safety in trainees' workplaces are unsatisfactory. The company does carry out health and safety checks on new employers and aims to carry out subsequent checks annually. Records of these are held in individual employers' files. Many annual checks are overdue and many of the employers' liability insurance certificates stored in the files are out of date. There is no overall system for monitoring health and safety.

18. Training in key skills is unsatisfactory. In the past four years, only 20 per cent of leavers have achieved the key skills units specified on their individual learning plans. Key skills are left until trainees reach a level 3 NVQ, when evidence from their NVQ portfolio is cross-referenced to the key skills units. Other than a one-day awareness-raising event attended by one of the directors, trainers have undertaken no formal training in how to teach key skills. None of the training staff have themselves undertaken key skills units. Until very recently, there has been no initial assessment of trainees' ability in key skills. Key skills were not mentioned in the company's original strategic plan. A new strategic plan, prepared during the week of the inspection, covers key skills.

Equality of opportunity

Contributory grade 3

19. McArthur Dean has carefully designed procedures for selecting and recruiting trainees, which ensure equality of opportunity. There are clear criteria for selection to ensure that applicants are judged on merit. Of those attending for interview, more than 80 per cent are offered a training place. Records are kept of all applications and interviews. Trainees have a good understanding of equal opportunities and recall much of the content of their induction, a strength noted by the company in its self-assessment report. The company has a clear procedure for complaints and trainees understand how to use it. Facilities are accessible to those with mobility difficulties. Although the training premises are on the second and third floor, the building has a lift. Some staff have not attended training in equal opportunities, although others have attended short courses, for example on awareness of disabilities.

20. There are no procedures for implementing the equal opportunities policy. The company's marketing strategy makes no reference to equality of opportunity. However, the company's promotional literature and marketing materials clearly state its commitment to equality of opportunity. With this exception, there is little active promotion of equal opportunities and insufficient monitoring of equal opportunities in the workplace. The new form for recording reviews of progress includes a section on equality of opportunity, but this is rarely completed. Data on equality of opportunity are collected. However, these data are not analysed or used to shape the company's action plan.

Quality assurance**Contributory grade 4**

21. Arrangements for quality assurance are unsatisfactory. Overall responsibility for quality assurance lies with the training director. Various procedures have recently been written, but there is no overall framework for assuring quality. The company identified this as weakness in its self-assessment report. The procedures do not cover some important aspects of training, including off-the-job training and training in the workplace. The company does not evaluate the quality of training given in the workplace. There are new arrangements for obtaining the views of employers and learners, but these have not been implemented fully. Previously, the company had obtained learners' views through a questionnaire, but there was a low rate of response and the feedback was of little value. There is little analysis of data on performance. While information on learners' routes of retention and achievement, and qualifications on entry is available, it is not analysed or used. Trainers have a good knowledge of individual learners and their progress, but do not carry out detailed reviews of achievement rates or reasons for trainees leaving the programme early.

22. Documents are not adequately completed. Important forms, including individual learning plans, are inaccurate or incomplete. There are monthly checks of trainees' files to ensure that they contain all necessary documents. However, the quality of the information is not monitored. Minutes of meetings are kept, but they are insufficiently detailed and do not contain action points or records of progress against previously agreed action points. The company's policies and procedures lack reference numbers and dates.

23. The self-assessment report was produced by the two directors following discussion with training staff. Many of the strengths identified in the report are no more than normal practice. Inspectors agreed with some of the weaknesses in the self-assessment report and found additional weaknesses. The self-assessment report underestimated the significance of trainees' low rates of achievement. Except for equality of opportunity, the grades awarded by inspectors are in each case one grade lower than those given in the self-assessment report.

24. Despite a lack of formal systems, informal communication is good among the small teams of staff. Staff have a clear vision of the overall aims of the company and its learning programmes. The company has recently introduced several improvements to its systems for quality assurance but these have not yet had time to make an impact on the experience of trainees. However, all staff are fully involved in developing and implementing the improved procedures. NVQ assessment and internal verification are satisfactory. Records are clear and assessors meet regularly with the internal verifier to discuss trainees' progress and the introduction of new procedures. The company moves quickly to address external verifiers' action points when they arise. The internal verifier has recently introduced a structured programme of observations of assessors.

Good Practice

The company responds well to requests from trainees and employers. Training in mailmerging was specially organised when one trainee highlighted a need for it. New courses, such as in payroll administration, have been introduced in response to employers' requests.

Poor Practice

The forms for recording reviews at trainees' progress are poorly completed. Often, many sections are left blank. There is no procedure to check that forms are being completed fully.