

INSPECTION REPORT

Academy Education Ltd

10 September 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

Academy Education Ltd was founded in 1991 as a private school and has been offering government-funded training since July 2000. It offers modern apprenticeship training for 65 young people in hairdressing and they are all employed in the Greater London area.

Overall judgement

The quality of provision is not adequate to meet the reasonable needs of those receiving it. More specifically, the training for work-based learners in hairdressing is unsatisfactory and the leadership and management are very weak.

Work-based learning for young people

Work-based learning for young people is unsatisfactory in hairdressing. The company has 65 learners, of whom 51 are foundation modern apprentices and 14 are advanced modern apprentices in hairdressing. Much of the off-the-job training is good and results in portfolios of evidence are good. There is no training in key skills and learners cannot complete the modern apprenticeship framework. The company has only been offering training in its own right for 15 months and in this time, retention rates have been good. All learners receive individual support in the training centre. Evidence from the workplace is not being used, although all learners are on work-based learning programmes. Initial assessment is inadequate and does not cover the needs of a modern apprenticeship training programme. Learners' progress reviews are ineffective. They do not look at what progress learners are making towards achieving national vocational qualifications (NVQs) and do not take place on employers' premises.

Leadership and management

The leadership and management of Academy Education Ltd's work-based learning are very weak. The staff appraisal system has not operated for the last year and the training needs of the company for staff such as key skills have not been provided. Many of the procedures which are used for managing the training and quality assurance are not recorded in full. The link between on- and off-the-job training is weak. Training and assessment are given off the job, rather than as an integral part of the work-based programme. There is insufficient collection of management information. Training staff work together as a team and have regular meetings. There is a good equal opportunities policy but it is not adequately monitored in the workplace. Some good quality assurance procedures have recently been put in place but the overall quality assurance processes are poor and do not identify key weaknesses in training.

GRADES

Hairdressing & beauty therapy	4
Contributory grades:	
Work-based learning for young people	4

Leadership and management	5
Contributory grades:	
Equality of opportunity	4
Quality assurance	4

KEY STRENGTHS

- good individual support for learners
- intensive off-the-job training
- high retention rates on foundation modern apprenticeship programme
- good equal opportunities policy
- regular collection and action on feedback from learners and employers

KEY WEAKNESSES

- no key skills training and assessment
- no use made of work-based evidence
- ineffective progress reviews
- inadequate initial assessment
- poor links between on- and off-the-job training
- inadequate collection and use of management information
- inadequate monitoring of equal opportunities with employers
- poor quality assurance processes

OTHER IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED

- standard assessment monitoring system for all learners
- better understanding of key skills by staff
- better linking of the quality assurance cycle to the self-assessment process
- more long-term planning of internal verification

THE PROVIDER AND ITS CONTEXT

1. Academy Education Ltd (the Academy) was established in 1991 as a private school to offer hairdressing training. It resulted from the amalgamation of the Robert Fielding School of Hairdressing and the Morris School of Hairdressing, which had been offering hairdressing training for over 20 years. The Academy remained a private school until 1998, when it gained a contract for hairdressing training for the Focus Central London Training and Enterprise Council. In July 2000, the Academy became a mainstream provider with its own contract. All practical and theory training takes place at the Academy's central London premises, in the borough of Westminster, where it shares reception facilities with a separate commercial hairdressing operation. Government-funded learners attend the Academy's training school for one week out of every five. All learners are employed with commercial hairdressing organisations in Greater London including prestigious department stores. There are 38 sites where learners are employed.

2. The Academy has a contract with the London Central Learning and Skills Council (LSC). There are 65 learners on modern apprenticeship programmes. Areas of local growth in employment include real estate, information technology, media, hospitality, retailing and public administration. The 1991 census shows that 21.4 per cent of the population are from minority ethnic groups, compared with 6.2 per cent nationally. The unemployment rate in Westminster for June 2001 was low at 0.7 per cent, compared with the London average of 3.3 per cent and the national average of 3 per cent. In 2000, the proportion of school leavers achieving five or more general certificates of secondary education (GCSEs) at grade C and above in Westminster was 36.7 per cent, which is considerably lower than the national average of 49.2 per cent.

THE INSPECTION

3. A team of three inspectors spent a total of 12 days at the Academy during September 2001. They interviewed 20 learners, interviewed all the Academy's training staff, visited five employers and interviewed six of their staff. Thirteen NVQ portfolios and 13 individual learning plans were examined. Inspectors observed learners' inductions, assessment sessions, monitoring visits and interviews with prospective learners. They observed and graded 10 training sessions. They examined a range of documents including learners' records, the company's plans, policies and procedures, promotional literature and awarding bodies' reports. Inspectors studied the Academy's self-assessment report, which was produced in July 2001.

Grades awarded to learning sessions

	Grade 1	Grade 2	Grade 3	Grade 4	Grade 5	Grade 6	Grade 7	Total
Hairdressing & beauty therapy	1	0	4	2	2	1	0	10
Total	1	0	4	2	2	1	0	10

OCCUPATIONAL AREAS

Hairdressing & beauty therapy

Grade 4

Programmes inspected	Number of learners	Contributory grade
Work-based learning for young people	65	4

4. The Academy offers modern apprenticeships in hairdressing leading to NVQs at levels 2 and 3. There are 51 foundation modern apprentices and 14 advanced modern apprentices. Fifty-nine learners are working towards the NVQ at level 2 and six learners are working towards the level 3. Key skills have not been introduced into the apprenticeship programmes. All learners have an individual learning plan. They are recruited directly by employer salons or referred by the careers service. Many of the learners have been working in salons on a Saturday before leaving school. The Academy links with 38 salons where learners are employed. Four attend the training centre on a day-release basis and the others attend for one week in every five. Most salons offer regular training, but some rely heavily on the training centre. The week at the training centre is spent carrying out the theory and practice of hairdressing, observing demonstrations, compiling portfolios and having practical work assessed on clients. There is no assessment in the workplace. All evidence is generated from the work carried out on models at the training centre. There are eight training staff at the Academy, seven have assessor qualifications and one is working towards them. There is one internal verifier. A new progression report form was introduced in August of this year which records the work which is carried out during the off-the-job training week, and a copy is sent to the employer. The progress reviews are not always carried out every quarter, which is a requirement of the LSC. Many of the progress reviews that do take place are carried out in the training centre and not in the workplace and do not involve the employer.

The following tables show the achievement and retention rates available up to the time of inspection.

Work-based learning for young people										
Foundation modern apprenticeships (FMA)										
	1997-98		1998-99		1999-2000		2000-01		2001-02	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Number that started							27		36	
Still in training							23	85	33	92
FMA framework completed							0	0	0	0
NVQ level 2 completed							2	7	0	0
Left without completing the framework							4	15	3	8

Work-based learning for young people										
Advanced modern apprenticeships (AMA)										
	1997-98		1998-99		1999-2000		2000-01		2001-02	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Number that started							29		0	
Still in training							18	62	0	0
AMA framework completed							0	0	0	0
NVQ level 2 completed							1	3	0	0
NVQ level 3 completed							0	0	0	0
Left without completing the framework							11	38	0	0

STRENGTHS

- good individual support for learners
- intensive off-the-job training
- good portfolios of evidence
- high retention rate on foundation modern apprenticeship programme

WEAKNESSES

- no key skills training and assessment
- no use made of work-based evidence
- ineffective progress reviews
- inadequate initial assessment
- some poor teaching

OTHER IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED

- better written feedback on assignments
- more involvement of learners in producing progression reports
- standardised assessment monitoring system for all learners

5. Learners are given good support during their time in the training centre. Some learners who have English as a second language are given one-to-one support to help them understand the requirements of their work. Tutors regularly go through portfolios with the learners to make sure they understand how to compile the evidence required for the NVQ. Learners build effective relationships with the tutors through the support

they are given. Good written feedback is given to learners on their practical work and it is recorded on the clients' consultation sheets and on the assessment log books. However, the feedback is not as comprehensive for the written work and the assignments. Since August, learners have received daily written feedback through a progression report which records the work carried out and the standard of the work produced. Each learner is seen individually at the end of each day during the off-the-job training to complete the report.

6. The intensive week of off-the-job training is favoured by most learners rather than the traditional day release. Throughout the week they observe regular demonstrations, build up background knowledge, work on blocks and models, complete written work and assignments, and compile their portfolios of evidence. The learners work together well as a team and build good relationships with staff and other learners. Many have been on other training programmes and they speak highly of the way this system works. Tutors have current commercial skills and offer good practical training. At the end of the week, the learners are expected to complete an assessment monitoring sheet which records outstanding assessments. However, this document is not being used by all tutors and learners.

7. The learners produce good portfolios of evidence from assessment activities at the training centre. They are clearly referenced and evidence is easy to find. All practical work is supported by client consultation sheets with written feedback from the client and the tutor. There are also photographs to support some of the practical work. The assignments are of a good standard. The assessment practice at the training centre meets awarding body requirements and the assessors work hard to clarify any areas that the learners are unsure about. There is one internal verifier. Sampling of assessment practice is planned but does not always take place due to the workload of the internal verifier, who has to cover for staff absences.

8. The retention rates on the foundation modern apprenticeship programme are good. In 2000-01, four of the 27 starters left early, and two of them had achieved the NVQ at level 2. In the contractual year 2001-02, 36 learners started and 33 are still in training. Learners are given the chance to sample the training before being formally taken on as modern apprentices. The company has been successful in attracting men onto the training programme and currently 14 per cent of the learners are men. Learners are encouraged to progress onto the level 3 of the NVQ and to transfer on to the advanced modern apprenticeship if appropriate.

9. The Academy has taken on learners as modern apprentices but it does not offer the key skills which are needed to achieve the framework. This weakness was not identified in the self-assessment report. The staff's knowledge of key skills is poor. Two learners have almost achieved the NVQ, but are not in a position to achieve the modern apprenticeship framework. The tutors have been given referencing grids for key skills but they have had no guidance as to how they should be used.

10. The apprenticeships at the Academy are run solely at the training centre and there is

insufficient linkage with the workplace. Most employers are unaware of the full requirements of the work-based programme which their learner has signed up to. All assessment is carried out in the training centre and no consideration is given to work-based evidence from the salons. There are not always sufficient models at the training centre for assessment. The company identified in the self-assessment report that there was a lack of models, but failed to identify that evidence is not collected from the workplace. Some aspects of the NVQ which could easily be covered at work are not considered. For example, a few learners who have been in training for a year are still waiting for conditioning treatments to complete the unit. The learners are working on these skills daily at their salons and could have used this evidence.

11. Not all learners receive their quarterly progress review on time. Some reviews are carried out in the training centre and do not adequately review progress. The forms are completed by the learners, are reviewed by the financial director and then filed. The information does not record progress towards achievement of the NVQ. One learner has complained about the lack of work-based learning but no action has been taken to resolve this. The employer has no involvement with the progress reviews and no action plans or targets are set to encourage progression.

12. There is not a comprehensive form of initial assessment. Basic skills testing was introduced for new learners in July, but the company has a poor understanding of the components of initial assessment, such as key skills.

13. Thirty per cent of the training which was observed by inspectors was unsatisfactory. The induction training observed was poor, with little explanation of what learners could expect. Some of the teaching was intimidating and inappropriate language was used. Some of the induction was carried out by working through a handout, but it was tedious and there was little interaction between learners and trainers. Learners remembered little of the information.

Good Practice

Although the off-the-job training pattern means that the employer has to find cover for the learner for a week, the intensive training is good. Employers feel that their learners made better progress than they would have done on day release.

Poor Practice

On the first day of induction, the learners were given a video to watch. The monitor was difficult to see and the trainer did not stay in the room. The trainer did not make any reference to the video on return and no explanation was given as to why it was used.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT**Grade 5**

14. The Academy is managed by a managing director and a financial director. A director of training, who reports to the directors, is responsible for government-funded training. The training centre is run by a director of education with seven full-time tutors. Weekly staff meetings are held for the training staff and the financial director attends by invitation. The Academy is situated on one site, which consists of a commercial salon and a training centre. Assessment and internal verification policies and procedures are held at the training centre. The director of training monitors the work of the assessors and trainers through internal verification and observation. The training team meet on a weekly basis, to discuss the training. There is a comprehensive equal opportunities policy. The quality assurance policies and procedures are new and are not linked to the self-assessment process. The company holds the Investors in People award. The Academy started the self-assessment process for the first time in March 2001 and submitted their report for the inspection in July 2001.

STRENGTHS

- good communication between training centre staff
- good equal opportunities policy
- good proportion of men and learners from minority ethnic groups
- regular collection and action on feedback from learners and employers

WEAKNESSES

- poor links between on- and off-the-job training
- no formalised staff appraisal system
- inadequate collection and use of management information
- poor promotion of equal opportunities
- inadequate monitoring of equal opportunities with employers
- poor quality assurance processes

OTHER IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED

- increase the number of staff trained as internal verifiers
- better understanding of key skills by staff
- better linking of the quality assurance cycle to the self-assessment process
- more long-term planning of internal verification

15. Communication between the training staff is good. They meet each week to discuss the learners' progress and other areas such as internal verification and monitoring of progress. The meetings are minuted and actions are agreed for the next meeting. The financial director is occasionally invited to attend to discuss relevant areas. The training team is relatively small and they all work in the same area, which helps the day-to-day

communication.

16. Links between on- and off-the-job training are poor. The Academy offers a structured system of NVQ hairdressing training but it is not linked to the work being carried out in the salons. Many employers offer on-the-job training, but it is not co-ordinated with the off-the-job training. Monitoring visits which are carried out by the Academy are unscheduled. They take place on a casual basis with no timetabling, or agreed dates with learners or their employers. There are no progress reviews carried out in the workplace, which is a requirement of the LSC contract. Employers are not adequately involved in the review process and there is no focus on the NVQ process or achievement of elements and units. The documents which are completed during monitoring visits are based on pastoral care and do not set targets to be achieved between reviews. All training and assessment takes place at the training centre, and employers are not encouraged to sign evidence to support the NVQ assessment. Although all learners are registered as modern apprentices, no key skills training is taking place and evidence from the workplace is not being used.

17. There is no formal staff appraisal system in operation but this was not identified as a weakness in the self-assessment report. There is one qualified internal verifier but none of the assessors are training to become internal verifiers. No staff are qualified, or are undertaking training in key skills, although it is part of the modern apprenticeship framework. Staff development as a whole is poorly managed and the system does not identify key skills as a development need. Staff who give training are not fully aware of the requirements of the framework.

18. The management information system is inadequate and this was identified in the self-assessment report. There is little use of the data collected, and it is not used as a basis for change or to improve the quality of the training programme. The system is not geared to set or influence targets for retention, achievement, or progression rates. Staff have little understanding of the importance of setting and evaluating targets. This weakness was not identified in the self-assessment report.

19. Staff are not fully familiar with the requirements of key skills for modern apprenticeships and are not trained as key skills practitioners. One of the training staff is working towards a teaching qualification, but others do not have a good understanding of formal methods of creating systems to organise teaching effectively.

Equality of opportunity

Contributory grade 4

20. The company has a comprehensive equal opportunities policy. It has recently been reviewed to reflect the fact that the Academy does not discriminate on the grounds of the source of learners' funding. Equal opportunities is a standard agenda item at the staff meetings each week. The training centre and most of the salons have good access for people with mobility problems. Learners who have English as a second language have been given good one-to-one support with their training. There is good representation of men at 14 per cent and learners from minority ethnic groups at 27 per cent. All learners are aware of how to make a complaint if the need arises.

21. There is no active promotion of equal opportunities in any of the company's promotional literature or advertising. There is no equal opportunities statement on any of the company's promotional material or in any trade advertisements. Around half of the staff concerned with training are men and act as role models. Equal opportunities is not monitored in the workplace. The company does not ensure that employers have an equal opportunities policy or policy statement and they do not follow any monitoring procedure to ensure that equality of opportunity is being offered in the workplace. There is no system to ensure that any changes to the law regarding equal opportunities is being passed on to employers.

Quality assurance**Contributory grade 4**

22. The Academy has a number of recently introduced quality assurance procedures which directly relate to the quality of the training process. The financial director is the key manager for quality assurance and regularly receives feedback from talking to learners and employers. There is an overall quality assurance policy, but it is brief and does not lay down procedures for self-assessment and the full evaluation of training. Since beginning self-assessment in the current contractual year, staff have become aware of several areas of weakness and good progress has been made in rectifying them. Feedback is collected every quarter using questionnaires which ask several questions related to training and include suggestions for improvement. Although action is being taken, it is too early to have made significant improvements to the training. Employers are contacted on a regular basis by the financial director and staff from the training school and employers report that concerns are quickly dealt with. Some of the quality assurance procedures which are carried out, such as visits to salons, are not fully recorded and this makes any future reviews difficult. Quality assurance is a standard agenda item at weekly staff meetings, but self-assessment is discussed each month.

23. Quality assurance is unsatisfactory. Self-assessment is new to the company and is not an integral part of the quality assurance system as yet. The company produced its first self-assessment report two months before the inspection, using the framework of 'Raising the Standard'. The report did not identify some significant weaknesses in the training and it did not match any of the grades given by inspectors. The company has drawn up an action plan but several of the key weaknesses are not included. Little use is made of data for quality assurance and for setting targets for improvement. Internal verification arrangements are satisfactory. There is a schedule for observing assessments and sampling learners' portfolios. Written feedback is given on internal verification and there has been a clear improvement in this feedback. There is only one qualified internal verifier and pressures of day-to-day training mean that planned internal verification does not always take place on time. Internal verification is planned six months in advance.

Good Practice

Feedback is sought from learners every three months using a standard questionnaire. Employers are being surveyed in the same manner and are being contacted if any areas for concern arise from their feedback.