

INSPECTION REPORT

Kinderquest

3 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 *learndirect* 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

Kinderquest Ltd is a limited company. It is based in Wellingborough in Northamptonshire and provides work-based training for young people in early years care and education and customer services. Training is carried out across much of the country, from Plymouth in the southwest to Tyne and Wear in the north. Currently there are 65 modern apprentices on the company's training programmes.

Overall judgement

The quality of provision is not adequate to meet the reasonable needs of those receiving it. More than one third of the work-based training is unsatisfactory and Kinderquest's leadership and management are unsatisfactory.

Work-based learning for young people

All the modern apprentices are employed in nurseries owned, or managed by, Kinderquest Ltd. They work in well-ordered environments. There is some good off-the-job training. The learners receive a thorough induction to the workplace and they have a good understanding of the NVQ programme. The retention rate is high. Many learners are making slow progress and there is some poor assessment practice. The initial assessment process is poor. No help is provided for learners whose basic skills are weak. Key skills training is not an integral part of the training programmes and learners' key skills are not being assessed throughout the training. Learners and their assessors have poor understanding of the requirements of the apprenticeship framework. Individual learning plans are poor. They do not specify target dates for completion of individual units. Learners do not have copies of their individual learning plans and nor do their assessors. There are inadequate training resources. All learners receive a text book but few additional learning materials are available to them.

Leadership and management

Kinderquest's leadership and management are unsatisfactory. There is ineffective management of training in the workplace. There is inadequate monitoring of learners' progress. No targets are set for learners' retention and achievement rates. Kinderquest have identified many of the problems with their modern apprenticeship training and have produced comprehensive action plans to resolve them. Some action to rectify weaknesses had been implemented by the time of the inspection. Internal communications are good. There is a good staff appraisal system and an effective staff development programme. The quality assurance procedures do not

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cover the training process adequately. All off-the-job training is fully evaluated. There has, however, been no analysis of feedback from learners and employers. Internal verification practices are poor. The equal opportunities policy is comprehensive. Recruitment practices are good. There is, however, no action plan for the recruitment of learners from groups under-represented on training programmes. There is insufficient checking of learners' understanding of equal opportunities during the training programmes.

GRADES

Retailing, customer service & transportation	3
Contributory grades:	
Work-based learning for young people	3

Health, social care & public services	4
Contributory grades:	
Work-based learning for young people	4

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

KEY STRENGTHS

- well-ordered work environments
- good retention rates
- good staff appraisal system
- effective staff development schemes
- good recruitment practices
- good off-the-job training
- beneficial partnerships with external organisations to promote equal opportunities

KEY WEAKNESSES

- slow progress of learners
- poor assessment practice
- poor training in key skills
- no support for learners with weak basic skills
- poor understanding of modern apprenticeship framework among learners and assessors
- ineffective management of training in the workplace
- inadequate quality assurance of training
- insufficient checking of learners' understanding of equal opportunities

OTHER IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED

- more careers advice and guidance for learners
- more specific agreements with employers
- closer involvement of employers in training

THE PROVIDER AND ITS CONTEXT

1. Kinderquest Limited (Kinderquest) is a company providing childcare in the workplace. It manages 47 nurseries as well as playschemes throughout the United Kingdom on behalf of clients in the public and private sectors. Kinderquest also provides work-based training for young people in early years care and education and customer services. The company has 65 learners on its training programmes, all of whom are employed by Kinderquest. The learners represent around 12.5 per cent of the company's workforce.
2. Modern apprenticeship training is funded through a contract with the Learning and Skills Council (LSC) that is managed by the National Training Partnership. The contract covers a wide geographical area from Plymouth in the southwest to Tyne and Wear in the north.

THE INSPECTION

3. A team of four inspectors spent a total of 17 days at Kinderquest in September 2001. They interviewed 26 learners, conducted 17 interviews with Kinderquest's staff, visited 15 workplaces, and interviewed 14 workplace supervisors. Inspectors observed and graded, six training sessions. They examined a range of paperwork including learners' portfolios of evidence, learners' personal files and records, the company's plans, policies and procedures, promotional literature and awarding bodies' reports. Inspectors studied the self-assessment report produced by Kinderquest.

Grades awarded to learning sessions

	Grade 1	Grade 2	Grade 3	Grade 4	Grade 5	Grade 6	Grade 7	Total
Retailing, customer service & transportation	0	1	0	2	0	0	0	3
Health, social care & public services	0	0	1	1	1	0	0	3
Total	0	1	1	3	1	0	0	6

OCCUPATIONAL AREAS

Retailing, customer service & transportation

Grade 3

Programmes inspected	Number of learners	Contributory grade
Work-based learning for young people	27	3

4. The company has been providing training in this occupational area since April 2001. There are 27 modern apprentices in retailing and customer service. They are working towards an NVQ at level 3. Learners may join the programme at any time and have to complete their programme within 18 months. All learners have been recruited by Kinderquest through direct marketing to all Kinderquest nurseries. Learners, who already hold an early years professional qualification, are encouraged to undertake this programme as part of their personal development. All learners are employed. They attend a one-day induction programme. Additional off-the-job training is available to them. Kinderquest's staff visit learners at least once each month, in the workplace, to assess them and carry out reviews of their progress. Internal verification is undertaken by the NVQ centre manager with support from the NVQ fieldwork assessment co-ordinator. Five assessors work in this occupational area. Since the start of the programme, there have been no early leavers.

The following table shows the achievement and retention rates available up to the time of the inspection.

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									27	
Still in training									27	100

STRENGTHS

- effective short-term target-setting
- effective monitoring of learners' progress
- good off-the-job training

WEAKNESSES

- no initial assessment of learners
- poor understanding of framework requirements among learners and assessors
- no assessment of key skills

OTHER IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED

- more involvement of employers in training
- more systematic planning of assessments
- more rigorous checking of learners' understanding of induction topics

5. Short-term target-setting is effective. Learners have a good understanding of what they have to do and by when. Assessors make regular visits to learners in the workplace. Learners agree an action plan with their assessor during his or her visit and this specifies tasks which learners have to complete before the assessor's next visit. During their visits, assessors also carry out reviews of learners' progress. There are good relationships between the assessors and learners, with good support from employers, learners are making satisfactory progress. During their one-day induction, learners are given information about their training programme and the assessment process is explained to them. Learners have a good understanding of the NVQ process and related assessment practices. At the end of the induction, learners sign a form to confirm that the induction topics have been covered for them. Some learners, however, have only a vague recollection of what they have been told during their induction. The company has no process for checking learners' understanding of topics covered during the induction.

6. As the self-assessment report acknowledges, there are no arrangements for carrying out the initial assessment of learners. There is no assessment of learners' basic skills, key skills, or vocational skills. The needs of learners for additional learning support are not identified. There is no procedure for finding out the extent to which learners are able to develop and demonstrate the requisite NVQ competences in customer service through their job roles.

7. Monitoring of learners' progress is good. Learners record their progress towards completing NVQ units, on a special form. The assessor completes a single summary sheet of learners' progress towards completion of all units. Learners' progress is discussed at monthly meetings held between the NVQ centre manager and the assessor. Appropriate action is taken to help learners who are falling behind in their work.

8. There are good arrangements for off-the-job training. Kinderquest has developed a comprehensive training programme for learners. Off-the-job training is available at two locations, one in the north of the country and one in the Midlands. Learners attend off-the-job training sessions regularly. Learners who are unable to attend off-the-job training sessions are visited, by a trainer, in the workplace. During their off-the-job training, learners cover theory work for the NVQ in customer service and they develop key skills. Details of the training programme for the next three months are circulated to all nursery managers. Some learners, however, do not receive a copy of the training schedule.

Learners are provided with guidance notes on how to carry out case studies and on how to gather evidence of their competences from different sources. Learners are also given guidance on portfolio building. Portfolios contain work of a high standard and a wide range of diverse evidence. Employers help learners by making arrangements for them to attend off-the-job training. Some employers provide additional support by giving learners time during their working day to collect evidence for their portfolios.

9. Most employers have a good understanding of NVQs through their own experiences of working towards them. Most employers, however, have not been given copies of the customer service NVQ standards and assessment plans. There is also minimum involvement of the employer in learners' progress reviews. Assessment practices are satisfactory and assessors meet to share good practice. Although assessment through observation of learners' work is usually planned in advance by both learners and assessors, some is not. New arrangements have been introduced for internal verification but it is too early to form a judgement on their effectiveness. All assessors and verifiers are appropriately qualified.

10. Learners and assessors have a poor understanding of the requirements of the apprenticeship framework. Learners do not have copies of their individual learning plan and are not fully aware of the components of their modern apprenticeship training programme. Individual learning plans do not specify the optional NVQ units the learners aim to complete. Learners and their assessors are not aware of the requirement of the modern apprenticeship framework for learners to complete additional units. Learners are unclear about their long-term targets and of the dates by which they must complete their apprenticeship framework.

11. There is no assessment of key skills. When assessors have carried out assessment of learners' competences in customer service through observation of learners' work, they have not identified whether learners are also meeting the requisite standards in key skills. Some assessors and learners have a good understanding of key skills but others do not. All learners have been issued with a copy of the key skills standards and matrices on which to record their progress in key skills but no assessment activity has yet taken place. Learners have been given a log book in which they can record activities involving the use of key skills, such as the ability to work with others. During their off-the-job training, learners carry out work which strengthens their key skills.

Good Practice

One assessor is working towards customer service level 3 NVQ and key skills certification. The assessor is able to understand the issues being faced by the learner and has become more confident when assessing key skills.

Poor Practice

One learner has achieved a general national vocational qualification (GNVQ) and has a copy of the certificate in her portfolio of evidence. The learner's individual learning plan, however, does not take account of the learner's prior attainments in key skills.

Health, social care & public services**Grade 4**

Programmes inspected	Number of learners	Contributory grade
Work-based learning for young people	38	4

12. There are 38 learners working towards an NVQ in early years care and education at level 3. All are modern apprentices. They are recruited from the Kinderquest nurseries. Two are male and one is from a minority ethnic group. Learners work towards additional qualifications, such as those in first aid and basic food hygiene. Off-the-job training has taken place on three-day residential courses. These are to be replaced by one-day training sessions each month. Assessment is carried out in the workplace by senior staff in the nurseries or by assessors employed by Kinderquest. There are 32 work-based assessors. Of these, 20 are trainee assessors, and four are peripatetic assessors employed by Kinderquest. There are 12 internal verifiers employed by the company.

The following table shows the achievement and retention rates available up to the time of inspection.

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							35		16	
Still in training							24	69	14	88
Left without completing the framework							11	31	2	12

STRENGTHS

- well-ordered work environment
- good induction to the workplace
- high retention rate

WEAKNESSES

- slow progress of learners towards completing their framework
- poor assessment practice
- lack of understanding of NVQ process among managers and assessors
- poor arrangements for the initial assessment of learners
- no support for learners with weak basic skills
- poor key skills training
- inadequate training resources
- poor use of learning plans
- ineffective reviews of training

OTHER IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED

- more time for work-based assessors to carry out assessment
- wider range of evidence in learners' files
- more careers advice and guidance for learners

13. Learners are fully involved in planning and decision-making in the nurseries and these provide them with good, well-ordered work environments. Nurseries where learners are employed have good policies and procedures for the care and education of the children and learners understand these. The jobs learners have, enable them to develop the NVQ competences they need. Arrangements are made to enable learners to work with children of different ages. Learners are given additional responsibilities to enable them to complete NVQ units. Some managers and senior early years' workers with particular areas of expertise provide individual learners' with training.

14. Learners receive a thorough, three-day induction to the workplace. The induction includes work-shadowing staff. Checks are made on learners' knowledge of workplace procedures and any gaps in learners' knowledge are covered by a further induction.

15. The retention rate is good. Sixty-nine per cent of the learners who started their training in 2000-01, are still on their programme. The retention rate increases to 75 per cent when learners recruited during the current contract year are taken into account.

16. As the self-assessment report acknowledged, most learners are making slow progress towards the completion of their NVQ. Most learners have been on their programme for 10 months yet many have not completed any units and others have completed only a few units.

17. There is some poor assessment practice. Assessment has been focused on individual units and this has resulted in evidence not being cross-referenced to other

units. Some learners have had long periods of time without an assessor. The planning of assessments does not always take place or is inadequate and learners do not understand what is expected of them when they are assessed. The feedback assessors give learners on their performance is sometimes vague and perfunctory. Some assessors are working towards their assessor qualifications and have organised assessments to suit their own needs rather than the needs of learners. One learner was assessed twice on each aspect of one unit, on nine separate occasions, to meet the assessor's own training needs. Assessment decisions made are not verified until months after an assessment and some learners have had to complete additional work. Learners' work is posted to head office for verification. In some instances, it has been more than five months before work has been returned, and then the learners have been required to produce more evidence. When this evidence has been provided, even more has been asked for and some learners have worked on the same NVQ units for as long as 10 months. There is a disproportionate amount of written evidence in learners' portfolios and some of this duplicates evidence gathered through observation of learners' activity in the workplace. Some staff have good assessment practices but they do not share these with their colleagues. Assessors in the workplace do not always have enough time to carry out their assessments.

18. Nursery managers, some of whom are assessors, are unclear about the requirements of the NVQ and about recent changes the company has made to the way in which assessment is carried out. Many do not understand what key skills are or the requirements for learners to obtain certification in key skills. The company has developed a variety of ways to improve communication with staff in the nurseries. A newsletter, which specifically relates to training, is sent out weekly.

19. As the self-assessment report acknowledged, key skills training and assessment are not carried out well. Some learners are unclear of the requirements for them to obtain key skills certification and do not know how to collect evidence of their acquisition of key skills. They do not collect this evidence through their work towards the NVQ in early years, their activities in the workplace, and during residential courses.

20. The initial assessment process is poor. Learners receive an initial assessment of their basic skills but not of their key skills. Learners are not informed of their initial assessment results and these are not taken into account when drawing up learners' training plans. It is up to the assessors, who are already extremely busy, to give additional learning support to those learners who are identified as needing it. No member of staff has qualifications in the teaching of basic skills.

21. Resources available to learners such as books, videos and distance learning materials are inadequate. All learners are given a textbook and have access to a professional journal but few additional learning materials are available in the nurseries where they work. Learners are unaware of the library of learning materials at head office.

22. As the self-assessment report acknowledged, training plans are poor, are not updated regularly and do not contain target dates by which learners must complete

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NVQ units. Learners' initial assessment results, needs for additional learning support, and achievements are not recorded in the plans. The plans themselves are retained at head office and learners and assessors rarely have copies of them.

23. Reviews of learners' progress are supposed to take place each month but in practice, they do not. Some learners wait for up to three months before they receive a review of their progress. Issues identified during reviews are not always followed up. Few checks are made of whether, or not, learners reach the targets they are set during reviews. The review process is not effective in helping learners identify how they can make more progress towards achievement of their qualifications. Some learners' files are more detailed than others. The information in learners' files is not widely available to all those involved in the training process.

24. Learners receive insufficient careers advice and are not given enough information about counselling and the support services available to them.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

Grade 4

25. Kinderquest is managed by a board of four directors, all of whom are employed by the company. A training manager manages the training department which has responsibility for the training for Kinderquest throughout the United Kingdom. In addition to the training manager, there is an NVQ centre manager, a centre co-ordinator and a centre administrator. There are four peripatetic NVQ assessors and four peripatetic internal verifiers. Peripatetic staff have responsibility for a cluster of nurseries and learners. There are 32 work-based assessors. The company has a business plan covering all its work. The company has a policy on quality assurance. The quality assurance procedures for the training department are new and untried. The company has been accredited with the Investor in People standard and the national quality assurance standard, ISO 9001. It has an equal opportunities policy. The self-assessment report is the first the company has produced. It was written in May 2001 and updated in August.

STRENGTHS

- good business planning
- comprehensive action plans
- good internal communications
- good processes for staff appraisal and staff development
- effective evaluation of off-the-job training
- good recruitment practices
- beneficial partnerships with external organisations to promote equal opportunities
- rigorous complaints procedure

WEAKNESSES

- ineffective management of training in the workplace
- no targets for learners' retention, achievements and progression
- inadequate monitoring of learners' progress
- inadequate quality assurance of training
- poor internal verification practices
- no analysis of feedback from learners and employers
- no equal opportunities action plan
- insufficient collection and analysis of equal opportunities data
- insufficient reference to equal opportunities during training

OTHER IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED

- better recording of action points in minutes of meetings
- more specific agreements with employers
- more frequent collection of views of learners and employers

26. Kinderquest has a business plan covering the whole of the company's work, including the training and assessment department. This is underpinned by the development plan, which is a review of the company's business. The development plan is updated annually and is thorough and detailed. It sets out a good business rationale for the training of young people as a means of helping the company overcome its difficulties in recruiting skilled employees.

27. The business and development plans are complemented by comprehensive action plans. There is a six-monthly review of the work of the training department, which leads to a detailed action plan. Many issues identified in the action plan drawn up in December 2000 had not been addressed by the time of the review in June 2001. The action plan drawn up following the review in June is detailed, identifies areas for improvement and persons responsible for implementing the actions. Action which had been implemented by the time of the inspection, included a full revision of NVQ documentation and the employment of peripatetic assessors to help assessors in the workplace.

28. Internal communications are good. There are regular meetings of departmental managers. Staff are kept fully informed of the company's plans and are involved in developments affecting the work of the company. The training department staff meet regularly. Their meetings are minuted. Issues are discussed in detail and actions agreed. Issues raised in the meetings have included problems encountered with assessment of learners, internal verification and support for work-based assessors. Minutes show, that the training department has taken appropriate action to deal with issues related to training. The minutes do not always include action points which could then be followed up in subsequent meetings.

29. Management of training is ineffective. Learners do not receive enough assessment and make slow progress. Assessors are not allowed enough time to carry out assessments. Kinderquest has only recently employed peripatetic assessors to help assessors in the workplace. For many months, little or no, assessment was carried out. Much on-the-job training is not planned. Nursery managers who are training to be assessors in the workplace, are poorly managed and receive little support. Learners have not been given time to work towards their qualifications. A new policy of allowing learners up to two hours each week for working on their qualifications, has recently been introduced, but at the time of inspection, few learners had benefited from it. Nursery managers attend briefing sessions on modern apprenticeship training before their learners start training. There is, however, no written agreement covering the respective responsibilities of the nursery staff and the learners.

30. Targets are not set relating to the performance of staff and learners. No targets are set for learners' retention, achievements and progression.

31. There is inadequate monitoring of learners' progress. Kinderquest has a comprehensive management information system but this is not used to monitor learners' progress. Each assessor has his, or her, own record system for recording learners' progress. Information gathered by assessors is not collated centrally and managers do not have up-to-date information on learners' progress.

Equality of opportunity**Contributory grade 3**

32. Kinderquest has clearly written policies and procedures for equal opportunities and harassment. These are made available to all staff at induction and are displayed prominently in nurseries. All staff have a responsibility to promote equal opportunities and this is clearly stated in their job descriptions.

33. The company has good recruitment policies and procedures and managers are provided with training related to these. Detailed guidelines are available to staff on ways of countering racial discrimination in recruitment and selection practices. Staff are given examples of suitable questions to ask applicants. A video on interviewing techniques is available to staff. Recruitment and selection practices are monitored regularly. Managers place advertisements in publications that are widely read by members of minority ethnic groups.

34. Kinderquest is working with 36 early-years development and childcare partnerships providing training related to a range of topics, such as the celebration of cultural diversity and the development of an anti-bias curriculum. Staff are encouraged to attend their local partnership meetings. To further these partnerships, the company is developing marketing strategies aimed at encouraging more men to enter the profession. These involve the use of their own male employees as role models and positive images of men in the company's marketing posters and advertisements. They are collaborating with professional organisations to attract more men and women back into the profession, on a part-time basis, in order to benefit from their wealth of experience and broaden the age profile of the workforce.

35. Effective action is taken on any complaint. This is followed through until a complaint has been resolved satisfactorily. All complaints are logged. Action on complaints is allocated to managers and is monitored. Trends in complaints are analysed and reported upon, at meetings of the senior management.

36. The company has no action plan for the promotion of equal opportunities or the achievement of related targets within a specified timescale. There are no specific strategies for recruiting more learners from groups under-represented on training programmes.

37. There is a lack of systematic monitoring of equal opportunities data. Equal opportunities data on the gender, ethnicity, age and disabilities of applicants are collected. As the self-assessment report acknowledged, however, these data are not analysed in order to check whether the company is promoting equal opportunities effectively.

38. During reviews of learners' progress, staff do not check learners' understanding of the policies on equal opportunities and the countering of harassment. They do not encourage learners to raise issues related to equal opportunities. Regular discussion of equal opportunities is not an integral part of training programmes. Some staff receive training on equal opportunities but learners do not. On the childcare programme,

equality of opportunity is not covered in appropriate vocational units adequately or in sufficient depth in the programme as a whole.

Quality assurance**Contributory grade 4**

39. The operations director has responsibility for quality assurance. The company has a comprehensive quality assurance policy and a wide range of procedures. At the time of the inspection, however, the quality assurance procedures did not cover the training department. The training department is developing quality assurance procedures for all aspects of training and assessment. The company, however, has not identified clear criteria for quality and has not established how the effectiveness of these procedures will be monitored. Some learners' files are more detailed and better maintained than others. Some do not contain individual learning plans or the results of learners' initial assessment. There is wide variation in the quality of the records of the reviews of learners' progress. Some records are clear and detailed but others are not.

40. Schemes for staff appraisal and staff development are good. All staff are appraised annually by their line manager. Staff appraisal records are comprehensive and are kept in the personal files of staff. During their appraisal, staff have the opportunity to reflect on their work during the year and identify their training needs. Their training needs are taken into account in an annual training plan for the company, which identifies training priorities for the year. The training needs of staff are met. A report on the effectiveness of the training plan is produced for the managers and board of directors. Priorities for the following year's training plan are then identified. All staff are required to evaluate their training activities. Their evaluations are analysed and taken into account in the company's future training plans.

41. There is effective evaluation of off-the-job training. Learners evaluate off-the-job training and their suggestions for improving it are logged and acted upon. In response to suggestions from learners, future training events are to take place in nursery clusters and in regional venues in order that learners will not have to travel so far to attend them. Residential training events have undergone radical improvement in response to feedback from learners.

42. Internal verification practices are poor. Assessed work, for some units submitted for internal verification, has been re-assessed rather than internally verified. It has been returned to learners after many months and they are then required to carry out further work. Some assessed work has been seen by two internal verifiers who have given conflicting feedback on it. Assessors and some internal verifiers have a poor understanding of the role of the internal verifier. Internal verification is not planned systematically with the aim of ensuring that assessors' performance is monitored and an adequate range of assessed work is sampled. Internal verifiers play little part in the training of assessors and do not give them enough advice and guidance.

43. No analysis is carried out, of learners and employers' responses to questionnaires about the quality of provision. One questionnaire was given to learners and employers in May of this year. Many learners and employers responded to this and there is a lot of useful information in their returns. The training team, however, has not analysed the content of these returns and has not produced a report or an action plan to resolve the concerns raised.

44. The self-assessment report that the company prepared before the inspection, was the first it has produced. All members of the training team were involved in production. Inspectors agreed with many of the weaknesses identified in the self-assessment report but considered many of the strengths to be no more than normal practice. The company produced a clear action plan to rectify the weaknesses identified through self-assessment.

Good Practice

Kinderquest have been given a grant to fund a 'work/life balance' project, which aims to lead to the introduction of new working practices. The company wants to develop more flexible working practices to attract a more diverse workforce.