

INSPECTION REPORT

Sinclair's Hair & Beauty Academy

24 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

Sinclair's Hair and Beauty Academy is a private organisation with two training centres, in Sunderland and Newcastle. It provides training for foundation and advanced modern apprentices in hairdressing and beauty therapy. There are currently 92 learners, who are all employed in salons in Newcastle, Sunderland and surrounding towns.

Overall judgement

The quality of the provision is adequate to meet the reasonable needs of those receiving it. More specifically, work-based learning for young people is satisfactory, as are the leadership and management of Sinclair's Hair and Beauty Academy.

Work-based learning for young people

Work-based learning for young people in hairdressing and beauty therapy is satisfactory. Training is well planned and tailored to the individual needs of each learner. Training sessions are well structured. Learners' progress is closely monitored. Learners, training staff and employers all take part in progress reviews and regularly update learners' targets and goals. Employers co-operate effectively with training staff to help learners make good progress towards achieving units of their national vocational qualifications (NVQs). The proportion of learners who achieve NVQs at level 2 is good, at 80 per cent in 1998-99. However, the proportion achieving NVQs at level 3 is poor, at 20 per cent in 1998-99. Achievement rates for the full advanced modern apprenticeship framework are poor. Initial assessment does not adequately identify the additional needs of learners and is ineffective in helping them to choose the appropriate training programme. Achievement rates in key skills are low. However, Sinclair's Hair and Beauty Academy is aware of the deficiencies in key skills training and has taken steps to initiate improvements.

Leadership and management

The leadership and management of Sinclair's Hair and Beauty Academy are satisfactory. Communications within the organisation and with employers are good. The partners visit employers to establish links and to consult employers on more effective ways of working together. Learners and employers fill out questionnaires which are analysed and used as a good basis for improving training. However, data are not used as an accurate basis for self-assessment, for setting clear targets and for improving quality assurance. There is insufficient monitoring of equality of opportunity in the workplace.

GRADES

Hairdressing & beauty therapy	3
Contributory grades:	
Work-based learning for young people	3

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

KEY STRENGTHS

- effective management of training
- effective progress review process
- rapid achievement of NVQ units

KEY WEAKNESSES

- inadequate initial assessment of learners' needs
- low achievement rates in key skills
- inadequate monitoring of equal opportunities

OTHER IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED

- more work-based assessment by employers
- more targeted promotion of programmes to under-represented groups

THE PROVIDER AND ITS CONTEXT

1. Sinclair's Hair and Beauty Academy (Sinclair's) was established in 1998 to provide training in beauty therapy in the Sunderland area. In 1999, it extended its training to include hairdressing. In 2001, a second academy was opened to provide training in hairdressing in Newcastle. Sinclair's holds the Investors in People award. It employs one part-time and five full-time members of staff and provides in-house training for 92 modern apprentices who attend one day each week.
2. Work-based learning is funded through a direct contract with Tyne and Wear Learning and Skills Council (LSC). Sunderland has benefited from regeneration and capital investment, but unemployment in Sunderland in June 2001 was still 6 per cent, nearly double the national average of 3.3 per cent. The unemployment rate in Newcastle was also higher than the national average, at 4 per cent. At the time of the 1991 census, minority ethnic groups represented 1.4 per cent of the population of the Northeast, compared with 6.2 per cent nationally. In 2000, the proportion of school leavers in Sunderland and Newcastle achieving five or more general certificates of secondary education (GCSEs) at grade C and above was 38.4 per cent and 35 per cent, respectively, compared with the national average of 49.2 per cent.

THE INSPECTION

3. A team of three inspectors spent a total of 12 days at Sinclair's in September 2001. Inspectors interviewed 69 learners and observed and graded 10 training sessions. They conducted interviews with all Sinclair's staff, visited 13 work placements and interviewed 12 employers. They examined a range of documents including learners' portfolios of evidence, learners' records, the organisation's policies and procedures and reports from the awarding body. Inspectors examined Sinclair's most recent self-assessment report, which was produced in May 2001.

Grades awarded to learning sessions

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

OCCUPATIONAL AREAS

Hairdressing & beauty therapy

Grade 3

Programmes inspected	Number of learners	Contributory grade
Work-based learning for young people	92	3

4. Sinclair's has been offering training to young people since 1998 and currently has training centres in Sunderland and Newcastle. Sinclair's offers foundation and advanced modern apprenticeship training in hairdressing and beauty therapy. There are 92 learners, of whom 63 are studying hairdressing and 29 are studying beauty therapy. Twenty-five hairdressing learners are based at the Newcastle site. All other learners are based in Sunderland. There are two foundation modern apprentices working towards NVQs at level 2 in hairdressing and key skills. The 90 advanced modern apprentices are working towards NVQs at levels 2 and 3 and key skills. All learners are employed in local salons and may join the training programme at any time of the year. Learners are referred by their employers or through the careers service and local schools. The training programme is planned to enable most learners to complete their training in two years. They attend the training centres for one day each week. All learners attend a half-day induction and initial assessment for basic and key skills. Sinclair's works with 56 employers, ranging from sole traders to large high-street salons. There are three internal verifiers and seven work-based assessors.

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									2	
Still in training									2	100
FMA framework completed										
NVQ level 2 completed										
Left without completing the framework										

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			5		22		50		62	
Still in training			1	20	7	32	23	46	59	95
AMA framework completed			1	20	4	18	2	4	0	0
NVQ level 2 completed			4	80	15	68	23	46	0	0
NVQ level 3 completed			1	20	4	18	2	4	0	0
Left without completing the framework			3	60	10	45	24	48	3	5

STRENGTHS

- good planning of off-the-job training sessions to meet individual learners' needs
- rapid achievement of NVQ units
- many opportunities for additional training in a commercial setting
- effective progress reviews

WEAKNESSES

- some poor assessment practice in the training centre
- inadequate initial assessment
- slow progress by learners towards achieving key skills

OTHER IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED

- more on-the-job assessment of practical techniques
- better use of standardised documents to monitor learners' progress

5. Off-the-job training is good and meets the needs of individual learners. Trainers set individual targets for each practical and theory training session. Learners work at their own pace, but targets are closely monitored. If learners miss a session, targets for subsequent training sessions are revised. After each training session, the learner and trainer record achievements and set new targets to be completed at work. Employers receive a copy of these records. Trainers closely supervise and co-ordinate practical work. The learner records practical progress during on-the-job training and takes the

record back to the training centre each week. This process ensures the training at work reinforces the training at Sinclair's. Internal verification of the assessment process meets awarding body requirements and is satisfactory.

6. Learners make good progress and often complete units of NVQs ahead of the target achievement dates on their individual learning plans, in some cases five months ahead of schedule. When learners make slow progress, they are monitored closely and their target dates are renegotiated. Most learners are on target to achieve their NVQ ahead of schedule. Beauty therapy learners achieve NVQs at level 2 within seven months and NVQs at level 3 within 18 months of starting the advanced modern apprenticeship. All unit achievement is recorded in the learner's individual learning plan. There is very little assessment at work. Most evidence in the learners' portfolios is produced during off-the-job training. Learners often have to repeat work for assessment at Sinclair's which they do every day in the workplace. Two hairdressing learners were observed being assessed while performing skin testing on each other. The learner acting as a model was not wearing a gown or protective towels, and the assessment was carried out in the staff room. This assessment was not adequately prepared, or carried out to meet the requirements of the awarding body. Sinclair's is working with 10 work-based assessors in order to assess learners during on-the-job training, and is currently finalising a quality assurance process to monitor work-based assessment. Learners' progress is monitored by training staff. This forms part of the learners' progress review, which is conducted with the employer. However, there is no single document which gives an overview of learners' progress. Trainers use a variety of documents to record learners' progress, many of which repeat the same information. Documents are not standardised across both vocational areas. The standard of portfolios of evidence and learners' work is good. Trainers give written feedback to learners on all assignments, indicating which areas need improvement. However, there is insufficient use of witness testimony as evidence towards the NVQ. Learners' portfolios of evidence are kept at the training centre and employers do not understand assessment criteria and the requirements of the NVQs sufficiently.

7. There are many opportunities for learners to follow useful external training courses, both with their employers and with Sinclair's. Some learners take part in competitions and demonstration work with employers. This gives learners a wide range of additional skills. In beauty therapy, Sinclair's is a regional training centre for a well-known commercial company. Many salons where the learners work, use this company's product brand and treatments. Learners are able to use the company's products and treatments on clients in the salons where they work. This encourages learners to develop an awareness of commercial practices. Resources at Sinclair's training centres are good and provide appropriate facilities for learners.

8. Learners' progress is reviewed every six to 10 weeks. The learner, the employer and training staff all contribute to the progress review and to target-setting. A detailed record is kept. All those involved receive a copy. Individual learning plans are used to monitor learners' progress towards targets. Target dates are monitored closely. The learner updates the individual learning plan after every theory session, to keep track of progress.

Learners are encouraged to assess their own performance and are aware of their individual targets. Some individual learning plans have not been signed by the employer or Sinclair's.

9. Additional learning needs are not identified early enough in the programme. All learners complete three diagnostic tests to assess their additional learning needs. The first test is done at induction but subsequent tests are delayed by as much as six months. Many learners have completed units towards their NVQ before any additional learning needs are identified and appropriate support is given. This process does not help learners when they are choosing which training programme to follow. There are no action plans for providing appropriate additional support. Initial assessments are not always marked or recorded in the learner's file. Learners are not told the results of the tests. Sinclair's does not keep records of formal support given to learners. Learners' receive good pastoral and personal support from training staff.

10. Achievement levels in key skills are poor. There are no target dates for achievement on individual learning plans. In the past, learners have completed their key skills awards after achieving their NVQs. More recently, learners have started key skills training much earlier in the programme. They carry out assignments in the workplace and collect evidence based on their own job role. Some learners develop key skills at work, for example by using information technology or number skills at a high level. These skills are not assessed at work. Learners are not aware of their progress in key skills. Employers are not involved in assessing key skills and often do not know which key skills the learner is working towards.

Good Practice

In hairdressing, a de-motivated learner was placed with a different employer for one week to experience a different salon environment. He confirmed that the experience raised his aspirations. He is now on track to complete his qualifications. Another hairdressing learner, who had been in training for 12 months, has had the opportunity to work on photographic shoots. She has had her work published and credited in national trade publications.

Poor Practice

In beauty therapy, a learner was undertaking practical assessment in aromatherapy massage. She had long, lacquered false fingernails. The learner could not perform some of the massage moves properly. The assessor did not challenge the learner about her nails and allowed the assessment to continue.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT**Grade 3**

11. Sinclair's is run as a partnership. There are two partners, who are both actively involved in the management of Sinclair's. The main premises are in the centre of Sunderland, consisting of a commercial salon and a training centre for hairdressing and beauty therapy. A second academy in the centre of Newcastle opened five months ago and is a training centre for hairdressing only. Sinclair's employs one part-time and five full-time members of staff. A full-time post of administrator is vacant. Three staff are qualified internal verifiers and extra internal verification is bought in as required. Sinclair's has policies and procedures on equal opportunities, quality assurance, assessment and internal verification. There is an annual business plan. No subcontractors are used. Sinclair's began their first self-assessment report in December 1999 when they had five learners. Their third self-assessment report, used for the inspection, was written against the 'Common Inspection Framework' and dated May 2001. It included an action plan to deal with weaknesses. There are frequent formal staff meetings involving all the training staff. The organisation holds the Investors in People award. There is an appraisal system for staff involved in training.

STRENGTHS

- effective planning and management of training
- good communications with employers and between training staff
- effective use of learners and employers' feedback to improve training

WEAKNESSES

- inadequate use of data
- poor understanding of key skills training among employers
- inadequate monitoring of equal opportunities in the workplace

OTHER IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED

- more training for staff in how to teach key skills
- more targeted promotion of programmes to under-represented groups
- clearer long-term planning of internal verification procedures
- better use of feedback from learners in the self-assessment process

12. There is good co-ordination between on- and off-the-job training. This strength was recognised in the self-assessment report. Employers receive weekly progress reports from Sinclair's on learners' activities. Employers are encouraged to co-ordinate their salon training with Sinclair's. Most employers do so. Programmes are well planned and encourage learners to achieve qualifications quickly. Sinclair's keeps employers well informed about programme planning and communicates regularly with them about learners' progress and attendance. The partners visit employers to seek their views. The

partners use these visits to improve links between on- and off-the-job training, for example by making sure that off-the-job training refers to the commercial products which learners use in the salons.

13. Communication between training staff is good. All staff have one day allocated to administration and preparation work and there are regular informal meetings. Formal full-team meetings take place in Sunderland at least once every three weeks, and are documented. However, action points are not clearly identified in the minutes. The partners make sure all staff receive information on learners' progress, results of external verifiers' visits and new training developments. The partners produce an annual business development plan, which all staff see. There is a clear sense of direction and a determination to develop best practice systems within the business. The partners regularly monitor training contracts to ensure that Sinclair's keeps to its financial targets. Staff understand their roles fully and have clearly identified responsibilities. Training staff work well as a team. An effective mentoring system makes sure all new staff understand Sinclair's procedures and policies and the philosophy of the organisation. A new, well-planned appraisal system was introduced four months ago and includes feedback from learners on how satisfied they are with training. The system is intended to help Sinclair's to review how effective staff development activities are in improving teaching. For example, Sinclair's recognises that training staff need to take key skills qualifications themselves in order to improve teaching. Several staff have teaching qualifications. The partners encourage and support training staff in keeping their commercial knowledge and skills up to date. One member of staff is currently undertaking training to support learners with dyslexia.

14. Sinclair's produces reports on learners' recruitment, their retention and achievement rates and related issues, to meet the LSC's requirements. The management information system overall is inadequate. Sinclair's makes poor use of data as a basis for improving the quality of the training programme. There is no system for setting or reviewing targets for retention, achievement, or progression. Managers set general targets which are difficult to quantify or measure. This weakness was recognised in the self-assessment report. Employers receive information on health and safety and equal opportunities, but insufficient written information on the modern apprenticeship frameworks and key skills. They have a reasonable understanding of NVOs, but have little idea of the requirements of key skills and of the employers' role in helping learners to achieve them.

Equality of opportunity

Contributory grade 4

15. Sinclair's has an equal opportunities policy which learners are given at induction. Learners also receive an induction pack on appeals and grievance procedures. The trainers encourage group discussion to help learners understand their rights and responsibilities under equal opportunities. However, most learners have a simplistic view of equal opportunities. Little use is made of the review process or off-the-job training to promote better understanding of equality of opportunity. Some staff have recently attended training in equal opportunities. All employers are given Sinclair's equal opportunities policy. As recognised in the self-assessment report, Sinclair's has done little to reinforce this policy with employers. The organisation keeps a telephone log of any complaints and senior managers respond to the complaints quickly in writing.

16. Equal opportunities is not adequately monitored in the workplace. Sinclair's does not collect employers' policies and check they are suitable. Equal opportunities issues are not part of the learners' progress review in the workplace. The organisation is aware of this deficiency and has recently acted to improve the situation by including equal opportunities as a standard agenda item at all meetings. The organisation recognises that this is a first step. There is poor physical access to the training sites in both Sunderland and Newcastle for anyone with restricted mobility. Sinclair's currently has no plans to provide alternative fully accessible training facilities. Publicity materials used to promote training programmes to young people do not use positive images to attract people from groups which are under-represented in training. Some material states that the organisation is an equal opportunities employer, but the current prospectus does not.

Quality assurance**Contributory grade 3**

17. Quality assurance is managed by one of the partners. There is effective use of questionnaires to gain learners' views at each stage in their training. These have been regularly revised in order to improve their effectiveness. They give information on the quality of important areas of training, such as induction, which has prompted improvements in induction such as better training resources for equal opportunities. Other questionnaires give feedback from employers on the quality of training at Sinclair's and what can be done to work co-operatively with employers. Areas of concern are quickly dealt with. This strength was recognised in the self-assessment report. Retention rates are improving, partly helped by better progress reviews. Staff share good practice, such as effective assessment procedures. Lesson plans and handouts are used for hairdressing and beauty therapy training to help ensure consistency of approach from different tutors, but some documents contain small mistakes such as incorrect spellings or missing words which change meanings. Internal verification happens regularly, is recorded, covers all aspects, and generates written feedback which is generally useful and targeted at improving assessments. However, long-term planning is not clear enough and is not recorded on one document which gives the full picture of what is planned for the next 12 months. Currently, dates for planned activities are vague and several documents need to be cross-referenced to gain an overview. Points raised by external verifiers are quickly acted upon. Where appropriate, senior staff are internally verified by a commercially competent internal verifier who is bought in on a consultancy basis. One work-based assessor is being observed as part of the development of the internal verification procedures to include the workplace.

18. The quality assurance policy is brief and does not lay down procedures for how things such as self-assessment are to be carried out. Self-assessment is still evolving as part of the quality assurance procedures. The self-assessment report was generally accurate in overview with only one grade not being confirmed by the inspection. Many of the strengths identified in the report were no more than standard practice. Areas such as quality assurance and equal opportunities contained information that would have been better placed in other sections of the report. The report did not make sufficient use of the feedback gathered from learners' questionnaires.

Good Practice

Sinclair's has used effective strategies to encourage disaffected learners back into learning. They have established contacts with three local schools and developed projects to encourage learners into a career in hairdressing and beauty therapy. One school is in an area of regeneration. School pupils attend vocational training at Sinclair's for one evening a week and study for an introductory qualification which prepares learners for an NVQ in beauty therapy. Retention rates on this programme are very good. Of the 11 pupils who progressed onto beauty therapy modern apprenticeships, 10 have achieved or are about to complete the programme.

The first evaluation questionnaire which learners fill out has a number of open questions to check that learners understand key areas of induction. Examples include naming who the learners should approach if they had a grievance or problem. It also asks them for the meaning of equal opportunities. This gives trainers an immediate overview of areas which need to be reinforced by extending the induction.

Poor Practice

The quality of some documents used in Sinclair's is poor. In some cases documents have been poorly photocopied. Policies do not always contain dates for review or version numbers so that staff do not know if they are using current versions. There are spelling mistakes on initial assessment documents used with learners.