

INSPECTION REPORT

Positive Approach Academy for Hair

10 June 2002



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 Jobcentre Plus programmes. 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 **learn**direct provision
- adult and community learning
- training funded by Jobcentre Plus
- education and training in prisons, at the invitation of her majesty's Chief Inspector of Prisons.

Inspections are carried out in accordance with the *Common Inspection Framework* by teams of full-time inspectors and part-time associate inspectors who have knowledge of, and experience in, the work which they inspect. All providers are invited to nominate a senior member of their staff to participate in the inspection as a team member.

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 Jobcentre Plus programmes 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

The Positive Approach Academy for Hair is a small, privately owned training provider in Scunthorpe, Lincolnshire. The company was formed in 1984, and specialises in work-based learning for young people in hairdressing.

Overall judgement

The quality of provision is not adequate to meet the reasonable needs of those receiving it. The quality of training in hairdressing is unsatisfactory, with poor achievements. Training facilities are good, both at the provider and in the workplace, but there is little workplace assessment. Learners benefit from high levels of support and achieve good standards of work. Leadership and management are unsatisfactory. The company management is flexible and responsive, but target-setting and planning processes are insufficiently developed, and arrangements for assuring quality and equality of opportunity are inadequate. Inspectors identified significant failings in internal verification.

GRADES

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

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

KEY STRENGTHS

- good support for learners
- well-resourced training and salon environments
- flexible and responsive management style
- good integration of key skills with vocational training

KEY WEAKNESSES

- inadequate initial assessment
- insufficient assessment of learners in the workplace
- insufficient forward planning
- no co-ordinated approach to quality assurance
- inadequate internal verification processes
- insufficient understanding of equal opportunities

OTHER IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED

- better use of data for decision-making
- more detailed action plan for improving participation of under-represented groups

THE INSPECTION

1. A team of four inspectors spent a total of 16 days at the Positive Approach Academy for Hair (PAAH) in June 2002. They visited 14 workplaces, interviewed 30 learners and 12 workplace supervisors and employers. They carried out 18 interviews with PAAH's staff and observed and graded six learning sessions. Inspectors visited the subcontractor for information technology (IT) training and examined a range of documents, including 36 portfolios of evidence, 24 individual learning plans, learners' records, progress review documents, assessment records, external verifiers' reports, minutes of meetings, plans, policies and procedures. PAAH produced its first self-assessment report in 1998, and its latest report, which was used for inspection, in January 2002.

Grades awarded to learning sessions

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

THE PROVIDER AS A WHOLE

Context

2. PAAH was established in 1984. It is a privately owned company managed by the owner and a full-time manager. Its premises are close to the town centre of Scunthorpe and comprise a high-street hairdressing salon with a training room and office. PAAH's owner is responsible for health and safety and equal opportunities. The manager has responsibility for quality assurance and the training programmes. There are two part-time tutors and assessors, a finance manager and a part time administration assistant.

3. PAAH has 50 learners in work-based learning. Most learners are employed and attend PAAH for off-the-job training on one day each week. There are 22 advanced modern apprentices, 23 foundation modern apprentices and five learners working towards NVQs at levels 2 and 3. The training is funded by Humberside Learning and Skills Council (LSC).

4. Scunthorpe is the largest town in North Lincolnshire and has a population of 62,000. The local economy of North Lincolnshire was established on traditional industries such as steel manufacturing and agriculture. From the early 1980s, many of these industries declined, resulting in high unemployment. This stimulated action to regenerate the economy, and new manufacturing industry was attracted to the area. In recent years, the steel industry has re-established itself. The unemployment rate in Scunthorpe in January 2002 was 3.6 per cent, and in North Lincolnshire it was 3.4 per cent, compared with 2.9 per cent nationally. The 1991 census shows that the proportion of people from minority ethnic groups in Scunthorpe is 3.1 per cent, and in North Lincolnshire is 1.6 per cent, compared with 6.2 per cent nationally. In 2001, 42.3 per cent of school leavers in North Lincolnshire gained five or more general certificates of secondary education (GCSEs) at grade C or above, compared with the national average of 47.9 per cent.

Work-based learning for young people

5. Achievement rates are poor. Since 1998 there have been 66 advanced modern apprentices, 31 of whom have left without achieving a qualification. Sixteen of the 41 foundation apprentices over the same period have left without achieving the framework. The proportion of learners on NVQ programmes is much lower, but there are still poor retention and achievement rates.

6. Off-the-job training at PAAH is satisfactory. Learners have day release from their workplaces, and work on their background knowledge for half of the day. They also work on their practical skills by working in the academy's salon. Key skills are an integral part of the hairdressing assignments. Key skills in IT is subcontracted to a specialist training provider. Most of the learning is carried out in small groups or through individual contact with tutors. Staff offer good levels of individual support. The quality of the learners' portfolios and practical work is generally satisfactory or good. However, initial assessment is inadequate. The diagnostic tests used by PAAH are weak and do not cover key skills. There is no specialist help available for learners with additional needs. Assessment and verification are not satisfactory. Insufficient use is made of workplace evidence for assessment. Internal verification is not planned and does not always meet the awarding body's requirements.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

Grade 4

7. The director of PAAH has overall responsibility for managing the company and its training centre. The training manager has operational responsibility for managing the training programmes. Both are involved in the day-to-day training and assessment. There are also two part-time trainers and a part-time administrator. The director, training manager and both trainers are all qualified assessors. Three of them are also qualified internal verifiers. The company has recently taken on a modern apprentice to assist with administration duties. All staff are based at the training salon in Scunthorpe town centre. Health and safety and equal opportunities are managed by the director. Internal verification is the responsibility of the training manager. Both share responsibility for business planning and quality assurance. PAAH has policies for equal opportunities, quality assurance, and health and safety. There is a staff handbook which details grievance and disciplinary procedures. The company was first inspected by the Training Standards Council in 1998. Its most recent self-assessment report was completed in January 2002.

STRENGTHS

- flexible and responsive management style
- well-managed staff development

WEAKNESSES

- insufficient forward planning
- lack of effective target-setting
- no co-ordinated approach to quality assurance
- poor quality control of documents and learning materials
- inadequate processes for internal verification
- insufficient understanding of equal opportunities

OTHER IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED

- better use of data for decision-making
- better monitoring of framework achievements
- more use of websites to gain management information
- more detailed action plan for improving participation of under-represented groups

8. Managers and staff at PAAH work closely as a coherent operational team. There are good informal communications. Staff members meet on most days to exchange information on the training programmes, which provides good support for individual staff. Managers are very responsive to problems raised by staff or by learners, and problems are dealt with without delay. There is a management meeting every three

months where more significant problems are discussed. The progress of each individual learner is monitored on a wall chart. However, the chart does not monitor progress towards completion of the full framework.

9. The company has an effective staff appraisal and development process. The director carries out performance appraisals with each member of staff each year and they are well recorded. Individual development needs are identified and training is agreed and recorded to form part of the company's training plan. Continuous professional development of training has been supported. For example, three of the staff are working towards additional units of the hairdressing NVQ at level 3, as well as attending technical training sessions by product manufacturers. There are frequent opportunities to attend briefing sessions and short training courses held by relevant professional bodies. The company has also identified the need for one member of staff to undertake a basic skills teaching qualification. However, staff training needs in equal opportunities and quality assurance have not been recognised.

10. Planning at all levels in the organisation is weak. There is no strategic management plan. A business plan has been produced, but this is a short-term operational plan, focusing on work objectives. Planning for new developments, such as changes to the modern apprenticeships, does not take place to a timescale. When operational planning does take place it is usually informal and not recorded. A self-assessment development plan was devised in January 2001, but its implementation has not been effective and many of the weaknesses which were identified are still apparent. There are no records of monitoring or reviewing the plan. A further development plan was written after the self-assessment in January 2002. A diary listing future management activities, such as staff appraisals and learner questionnaires, is pinned on the office wall, but it is not a coherent or well-managed plan and does not include all activities from the development plan.

11. Action-planning is poor. Managers do not set challenging targets for the company or for individual staff members. For example, it is recognised that improvements to retention and achievement rates are needed, but targets have not been set. PAAH wants to increase the number of work placements and work-based assessors, but it has not identified a target or methods of achieving it. When targets are set, they are not specific enough and are not monitored. The company does meet its profiled targets from the local LSC, but the targets only relate to numbers of learners. Until recently, the company has not reviewed data to monitor trends. Data are now collected and have recently been used as a basis for management decisions. Most data are collated manually. A database is currently being developed which will allow more sophisticated reporting of data analysis. It is near completion, but does not include retention and achievement rates and equal opportunities data. Some staff use the Internet occasionally to check for new information on the awarding body's website. However, this is not checked on a regular basis.

Equality of opportunity

Contributory grade 4

12. PAAH's learners, staff and employers have an inadequate understanding of what is meant by equal opportunities and diversity. Company staff have not received training in equal opportunities. The principles of equal opportunities are introduced to learners during induction and they all receive a copy of the company policy, together with commercially produced material. However, their knowledge is not reinforced during training. Most learners have a poor understanding of their rights and the legislation which protects them. Employers' understanding of their responsibilities under current legislation is inadequate. Recent attempts by the company to resolve this by giving employers a set of current information, have not been effective. Monitoring of equal opportunities during learners' reviews is inadequate and records are poor or non-existent. The company does not promote diversity. For example, there are no positive images of diversity in the training centre. Access to some training facilities would not be possible for wheelchair users. A useful list of confidential helpline numbers is available to all learners.

13. There is no strategy or action plan to attract men, who are under-represented on the programme, or learners from minority ethnic groups. PAAH has sought help from the local LSC in their effort to increase these numbers and the director has had informal meetings with occupational colleagues, seeking ideas and support. There has been regular contact with schools over a number of years and a recent postal campaign uses images of high profile men to promote hairdressing. There have been initial attempts to attract learners from minority ethnic groups, but they have been unsuccessful so far. There are currently no learners from minority ethnic groups, although the proportion in the local population is 3.6 per cent. There is only one man on the training programme.

Quality assurance

Contributory grade 4

14. The company director and the training manager share responsibility for quality assurance. There is a comprehensive quality assurance policy, but it is not translated into effective operational plans and procedures for daily practice. For example, there are no procedures for internal verification or progress reviews. This weakness was partly identified in the self-assessment report. There are no schedules for quality assurance activities, and no clear statements of the standards required. There is little use of medium- and long-term action-planning to drive continuous improvement. The effect of these deficiencies is somewhat reduced by the strong informal communication within the company which enables staff to implement changes when required. However, staff do not fully understand the principles of quality assurance and continuous quality improvement.

15. The collection of information to support quality improvement is weak. For example, the training manager observes learning sessions informally, and members of staff have recently begun to review each other's performance. Reports from these observations are not critical and do not lead to improvement plans. Feedback from learners is gained by questionnaire, but this is in a format which makes results difficult to analyse and no action plan results from the surveys. There is no attempt to gather the views of employers. PAAH's staff, learners and employers are not sufficiently involved in the self-assessment

process. The process is not thorough or continuous. While self-assessment identified some weaknesses, inspectors identified further significant weaknesses, and some of the strengths were no more than normal practice.

16. There are no procedures to ensure that documents and learning materials are regularly reviewed and updated. The quality of some documents and training materials is unsatisfactory. They have errors and the layout is poor, which makes it difficult for learners to understand them. There is no control over revisions to important documents. Documents are not coded, dated or signed so their status is unclear. The equal opportunities policy has several versions in circulation.

17. In general, assessments are satisfactory and learners' portfolios are good. Learners have a good understanding of how the assessment process works. However, there is no formal or written procedure for internal verification and the sampling plan is unreliable. Inspectors identified examples of inappropriate internal verification practice. For example, trainers have assessed and internally verified the same units of the NVQ, in contravention of guidance from awarding bodies. Written and verbal feedback to assessors after verification is poor, and does not indicate how assessors can improve their practice. Company and work-based assessors do not meet regularly. There are insufficient opportunities for them to share good practice, standardise assessment, and learn about developments.

Poor Practice

Careers advice is not given to learners until they are about to leave the training programme. It is not included in off-the-job training sessions, or as part of the review process.

AREAS OF LEARNING

Hairdressing & beauty therapy

Grade 4

Programmes inspected	Number of learners	Contributory grade
Work-based learning for young people	50	4

18. PAAH offers foundation and advanced modern apprenticeships and NVQ training in hairdressing, leading to qualifications at levels 2 and 3 and key skills. Learners may join at any time of the year, but most learners start in the summer months. The training programmes are planned to enable most learners to complete a foundation modern apprenticeship in two years and an advanced modern apprenticeship in three years. Twenty-two of the current learners are advanced modern apprentices, working towards NVQs at level 2 and 3, and 23 are foundation modern apprentices. One learner is working towards a level 2 NVQ and four are working towards a level 3 NVQ. PAAH is currently working with 27 employers in the Scunthorpe area. Recruitment is through PAAH, employers and the careers service. Interviews are held throughout the year, and learners are offered taster days at PAAH and with employers to ensure that the proposed work placement is suitable. A one-day induction is held at the start of the learners' programme, covering course requirements, the appeals procedure, health and safety and equal opportunities. Initial assessment is carried out with all learners in the form of a basic skills test and a practical skills scan. PAAH operates from a purpose-built training academy in the town centre of Scunthorpe. Learners who are working towards level 2 and 3 of the NVQ attend PAAH one day every week. During this time they are trained in background knowledge, portfolio-building, practical training and assessment for NVQs, and application of number and communication key skills. IT is subcontracted to another training provider and learners attend in an eight-week block to achieve a level 1 qualification. The learners at level 2 and 3 are assessed and given individual support in the workplace by PAAH's staff or work-based assessors. All training staff have the appropriate training and assessment qualifications. Three members of staff are qualified internal verifiers and two have teaching qualifications. The training manager is accredited to approve prior learning. No members of PAAH's staff have key skills or basic skills qualifications. There are currently five work-based assessors.

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

Work-based learning for young people														
Advanced modern apprenticeships (AMA)														
	2001-02		2000-01		1999-2000		1998-99							
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Number of starts	1		36		12		17							
Retained*	0		4		0		10	59						
Successfully completed	0		4		0		9	53						
Still in learning	1		18		3		0	0						

*retained learners are those who have stayed in learning for at least the planned duration of their training programmes, or have successfully completed their programme within the time allowed

Work-based learning for young people														
Foundation modern apprenticeships (FMA)														
	2001-02		2000-01		1999-2000		1998-99							
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Number of starts	26		4		10		1							
Retained*	0		0		2	20	0							
Successfully completed	0		0		2	20	0							
Still in learning	20		3		0	0	0							

*retained learners are those who have stayed in learning for at least the planned duration of their training programmes, or have successfully completed their programme within the time allowed

Work-based learning for young people														
NVQ Training														
	2001-02		2000-01		1999-2000		1998-99							
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Number of starts			11		10		33							
Retained*			3		3		9	27						
Successfully completed			3		3		9	27						
Still in learning			4		1		0	0						

*retained learners are those who have stayed in learning for at least the planned duration of their training programmes, or have successfully completed their programme within the time allowed

STRENGTHS

- well-resourced training and salon environments
- good support for learners
- good integration of key skills with vocational training

WEAKNESSES

- poor achievement rates
- insufficient assessment in the workplace
- inadequate initial assessment
- lack of challenging targets in individual learning plans and progress reviews

OTHER IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED

- more consistent use of the personal assessment plan to record learners' activities in the workplace

19. There are well-resourced training and salon environments. PAAH has a commercial salon and a separate, well-equipped teaching room for background knowledge. Tools and equipment are provided by PAAH, so that the learners do not incur any costs at the start of their training. PAAH has links with a range of salons and this helps them to meet the different needs of learners. Most salons offer good experience, with industry-qualified and occupationally competent staff. Most salons have training nights where learners work alongside experienced stylists to practise their skills. Most learners are also able to take part in specialist technical training days in their salon and at PAAH.

20. Learners receive good pastoral support from the staff at PAAH. Learners who lose their work placements are employed by PAAH to enable them to continue with their training while seeking a new placement. The ratio of trainers to learners is low at two trainers to 10 learners. This allows individual support and guidance in practical and theory work. Individual supervision is given in practical sessions. Learners demonstrate good practical skills, and produce a good standard of written work in their portfolios. There are various types of evidence, including photographs, in their assignments and projects.

21. Key skills are an integral part of the NVQ programme. Learners are given information packs on key skills. The importance of key skills is reinforced to learners,

and the NVQ documents clearly indicate which key skills can be covered while undertaking that unit. Assignment sheets also guide the learner on how to present their evidence. Learners are aware of the key skills unit they are working on and work is evident throughout their portfolios. Learners undertake a separate course in IT with a subcontracting training company.

22. Retention rates on the modern apprenticeship programmes are satisfactory. However, achievement rates are poor. For the advanced modern apprentices who started training in 1999-2000, none has achieved the framework. Five of the learners who started in 2000-01 completed and six have almost completed. The achievement rate for those starting in 1998-99 was 53 per cent. On the foundation modern apprenticeship, the only reliable figures are for 1999-2000 starters with only two out of the 10 starts successfully completing the framework. On the level 3 NVQ, two of the eight starts in 2000-01 have achieved. However, four learners are still in training. On the level 2 NVQ, eight out of 32 learners achieved the targets on their individual learning plan in 1998-99. Three out of nine starts achieved the following year. The figures for 2000-01 show one learner achieving out of three who started.

23. There is insufficient assessment in the workplace. Most learners do not work in salons where there are work-based assessors. In a few cases, PAAH's staff visit employers to carry out workplace assessments, but this is not standard practice. Where there are work-based assessors, there is no consistent assessment practice. Most assessments are carried out during training nights and do not take advantage of learners who are working on clients during the day. Most assessments at level 2 and 3 are carried out at PAAH during learners' practical training sessions. Assessment planning is poor. Targets in individual learning plans or at progress reviews are not challenging enough for the learners or assessors. For example, a learner who started training in May 2001, was given until April 2002 to achieve a unit in shampooing and conditioning. Most of the target dates are not individual to the learner and if the learner achieves before that date the learning plans are not updated or changed. The targets set at reviews are not specific enough. The reviews indicate which units will be assessed but do not give details of what activities need to be carried out before the next review date.

24. There is inadequate initial assessment. A basic skills test has been devised by PAAH which identifies learners who may have additional learning needs. However, this test is a poor example for the learners as it has spelling and grammar mistakes in several areas. It is not an accurate diagnosis of needs, and the results are not used for the individual learning plans. When needs are identified there is no specialist support available. This has been recognised by PAAH and a member of staff is due to start training in this area. There is no initial assessment of key skills. Two learners who have dyslexia have been put in touch with outside agencies.

POSITIVE APPROACH ACADEMY FOR HAIR

Good Practice

Learners are given very good support to find and change work placements. PAAH offers coaching in interview techniques before placement interviews.

Poor Practice

PAAH does not always respond satisfactorily to requests from learners and employers to practise particular techniques. One learner's review records show that requests have been made for more than a year for more cutting practise to be carried out during off-the-job training.