

# INSPECTION REPORT

## Westgate Nursery School

11 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
- **learndirect** 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

Westgate Nursery School in Highworth near Swindon, Wiltshire, was established in 1992. It provides day care for children aged from three months to five years and nursery education for children aged between two and five years. It has offered publicly funded training for early years workers since 1997. There are currently six learners following modern apprenticeship programmes, all of whom are employees of Westgate Nursery School.

### Overall judgement

The overall quality of the provision is not adequate to meet the needs of those receiving it. More specifically, the quality of work-based learning for young people is unsatisfactory. The leadership and management of the modern apprenticeship programme at Westgate Nursery School are also unsatisfactory.

### GRADES

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

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

### KEY STRENGTHS

- high retention rates
- good support for learners
- good communication between staff

### KEY WEAKNESSES

- poor achievement rates

#### WESTGATE NURSERY SCHOOL

- no key skills training or assessment
- poor assessment practice
- inadequate initial assessment
- poor management of training
- inadequate promotion of equal opportunities
- no quality assurance policies and procedures

#### OTHER IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED

- more detailed learning plans
- earlier accreditation of achievement of units

## THE INSPECTION

1. A team of two inspectors spent a total of six days at Westgate Nursery School (Westgate) in June 2002. They interviewed all six learners and conducted five interviews with the company's staff. Inspectors also interviewed two staff from Westgate's subcontractor, a local further education college. Inspectors observed two assessments. They examined documents, including learners' portfolios of evidence, learners' records, plans, policies and procedures, promotional literature, and reports from an awarding body. Inspectors also studied Westgate's self-assessment report, which was produced in February 2002.

## THE PROVIDER AS A WHOLE

### Context

2. Westgate is a privately owned day nursery and nursery school for children aged between three months and five years. It is in Highworth near Swindon, Wiltshire and was started in 1992. The owner employs 19 staff, three of whom are advanced modern apprentices, and three of whom are enrolled on the foundation modern apprenticeship programme. Off-the-job training and assessment are subcontracted to a local college of further education.

3. Westgate's modern apprenticeship training is funded through a contract with Wiltshire Learning and Skills Council (LSC). Unemployment in the area is low at less than 2 per cent, compared with the national rate of around 3 per cent. People from minority ethnic groups represent 1.4 per cent of the area's population. In 2001, the proportion of school leavers in Swindon achieving five or more general certificates of education (GCSEs) at grade C or above was 44.5 per cent, below the national average of 47.9 per cent.

### Work-based learning for young people

4. Westgate's retention rates are high. There is good support for learners. There is no assessment of learners' basic or key skills needs at the beginning of the training programme. Learning plans lack detail. Arrangements for assessing learners' work are poor, and progress towards qualifications is slow. Reviews of learners' work are insufficiently thorough, and learners are not set clear targets. There is little off-the-job training.



## LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

## Grade 4

5. Westgate has a management team of three, comprising the owner, a full-time nursery manager, and a deputy manager. The nursery manager is responsible for the day-to-day running of the organisation, as Westgate's owner has another nursery in Kent and divides her time between the two organisations. In addition to the managers, there are 15 early years workers, six of whom are modern apprentices, and two catering staff. A local further education college is subcontracted to provide two assessors and to carry out internal verification. It also provides off-the-job training. Westgate has no quality assurance policy and no formal procedures for reporting on the quality of the training it provides or the service it gets from the college. It has an equal opportunities policy that covers all aspects of its work. The most recent self-assessment report was produced in February 2002. Inspectors did not agree with all of the strengths in the self-assessment report, and identified a number of additional weaknesses.

### STRENGTHS

- good communication between staff

### WEAKNESSES

- poor management of training
- inadequate target-setting for learners
- inadequate arrangements for staff appraisal
- no targets for staff
- inadequate promotion of equal opportunities
- no quality assurance policy or procedures
- poor use of feedback from learners
- delayed internal verification

### OTHER IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED

- earlier accreditation of achievement of units
- more structured feedback on external training courses

6. Communication between members of staff is good, helped by the small size of the organisation and of the teams in which they work. Westgate's owner maintains daily contact with the nursery manager. Weekly staff meetings, attended by the nursery manager, deputy manager and team leaders have recently been introduced, at which the day-to-day running of the school is discussed. The meetings do not have formal agendas and no notes are kept.

7. Training is poorly managed, and the planning of learners' programmes is insufficiently thorough. However, there are documents detailing the roles and responsibilities of Westgate's early years workers, which clearly set out the duties expected of learners in

the workplace. Staff discuss the planning of training at some of their meetings, but do not record their discussions. Assessors meet the nursery manager following each of their visits to give verbal feedback on the work they have seen, but arrangements for monitoring learners' progress are otherwise ineffective. Staff do not collect the data they need to enable them to set realistic targets and completion dates for learners and to measure their performance. Learners are uncertain of how far they have progressed towards completion of the modern apprenticeship framework. They are allowed to delay progress until they feel ready to advance.

8. Staff are appraised annually. Recording of appraisal interviews has only recently started. Staff do not have clear targets for either their own development, or for that of the organisation. There is no formal process for assessing their training needs. Westgate does not provide a training and development programme, but staff are encouraged to attend external training events whenever possible. There is no formal system for evaluating these events, but staff discuss the knowledge they have gained with their colleagues on their return and identify ways of using it in the workplace.

9. Westgate is actively involved with two groups that promote and support local providers of early years care, a pre-school learning alliance and an under-five cluster group. The nursery manager chairs the local nursery school managers' forum. Westgate has a good relationship with local schools and offers work placements to school pupils interested in a career in early years care. A benefit of the programme is that staff from Westgate are regularly invited to take part in careers events in the local area and at the schools.

**Equality of opportunity****Contributory grade 4**

10. Westgate's equal opportunities policy statement clearly sets out for staff and learners, their responsibilities for ensuring equality of opportunity for the children in their care and for their colleagues. The policy stresses the need to set a good example and to value all people equally. It is given to staff and learners during induction. The policy is reviewed at intervals, but it has not been updated to include references to relevant legislation.

11. Staff have a narrow understanding of equal opportunities and of the need to develop awareness among learners of changes in legislation. There is insufficient promotion of equal opportunities to reinforce the policy statement. Some learners showed little understanding of equality of opportunity beyond the issues affecting the children in their care. There are no arrangements for training and updating staff and learners in equal opportunities and changes to legislation.

12. Data relating to equal opportunities are collected and recorded primarily to meet the requirements of external agencies. They are not analysed and are not used in the recruitment or training of staff and learners. Managers are aware that men are particularly under-represented among employees in early years care, and of the importance of presenting children with role models from both sexes. They have recently recruited a male member of staff.

13. Westgate's work placement programme for local school pupils enables young people from a variety of backgrounds and of different levels of ability to gain experience of early years care as a career. The nursery also recruits learners through advertisements in the local press and through direct applications. There are no strategies for increasing the numbers of learners from under-represented groups recruited onto the modern apprenticeship programme, though the importance of targeting such groups is acknowledged.

14. Westgate does not have detailed complaints and grievance procedures. However, staff and learners understand their rights and responsibilities and know which lines of communication to use should they have a problem.

## Quality assurance

## Contributory grade 4

15. Westgate has no quality assurance policy. There are no procedures for ensuring that staff deal with learners consistently and seek to improve the quality of the on-the-job training they receive. Staff do not fully understand that they have a role to play in improving the quality of training. Contacts between the staff at the nursery, learners and the subcontractor are frequent and include some informal quality assurance of the training process. Some recent improvements to training have been made as a result, for example, the introduction of specialist basic skills support for learners.

16. Westgate does not monitor the assessment and training services provided by the subcontractor. There are no written procedures relating to progress reviews and the quality of off-the-job training sessions. Feedback from learners is not gathered in a consistent way and little use is made of it. The recently revised review form has a section for learners' comments, but it is not always used. The review forms are not used effectively to set appropriate targets for the learners. There is no collection of data on learners' progress to inform staff of the quality of the training programme.

17. There is no clear policy or plan to ensure the timely internal verification of portfolios and assessments. Internal verifiers do not observe assessors conducting assessments in the workplace or giving feedback. There has been no accreditation of units as soon as possible after learners have completed them and this has had an adverse affect on some learners' motivation.

18. The nursery manager compiled the self-assessment report with contributions from other staff members. The self-assessment report evaluated strengths and weaknesses under the headings of the seven questions in the 'Common Inspection Framework'. Inspectors gave lower grades than those shown in the self-assessment report since many of the strengths it identified were no more than normal practice. Westgate also takes part in the self-assessment process of the local early years development and childcare partnership of which it is a member.

## AREAS OF LEARNING

Health, social care & public services

Grade 4

Programmes inspected	Number of learners	Contributory grade
Work-based learning for young people	6	4

19. The three advanced modern apprentices are working towards a level 3 NVQ in early years care and education and the three foundation modern apprentices are working towards the same NVQ at level 2. All learners are employed by Westgate. All are women, and none is from a minority ethnic group. On joining, new recruits complete a three-month trial period and then, if successful, start on the modern apprenticeship programme. The induction programme includes an opportunity to work with different age groups and staff. Learners study for a first-aid qualification during their training. Assessment and verification are subcontracted to a local college of further education, as is off-the-job training.

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)																
	1999-2000		1997-98													
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Number of starts	2		3													
Retained*	2		3	100												
Successfully completed	0		0	0												
Still in learning	2		1	33												

\*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)																
	2000-01		1999-2000		1997-98											
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Number of starts	2		2		1											
Retained*	2		2	100	1	100										
Successfully completed	0		0	0	0	0										
Still in learning	2		0	0	1	100										

\*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**

- high retention rates
- good support for learners

## **WEAKNESSES**

- poor achievement rates
- no key skills training or assessment
- slow progress by learners
- poor assessment practice
- inadequate initial assessment
- poor progress reviews

## **OTHER IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED**

- more detailed individual learning plans
- more attention to correcting errors in portfolios
- broader range of training resources
- more time for private study

20. Retention rates are high. Of the 10 learners who have started training since 1997, all have stayed until the end of the programme. Six of them remain in training. Learners enjoy their work at the nursery and benefit from the help and expertise of competent staff. Two assessors attend the nursery for a total of six hours every two weeks to carry out assessments. A recent addition has been a basic skills specialist from a local college, who supports three of the learners for an hour each fortnight. This support has been effective in improving the progress learners are making towards qualifications. Some time is given to learners for study during the working day when staffing permits, but learners find this time too short for them to complete the required written work.

21. Achievement rates are poor. No learner has yet achieved the full modern apprenticeship framework. Two have gained a level 2 NVQ. Key skills training is inadequate. None of the learners is aware of the requirements of the key skills qualification or have started their training or assessment. Westgate's managers are unclear as to how this will happen. Progress remains slow for learners. Two have achieved no units despite being assessed for over a year. Others have achieved few

units considering the length of time they have been on the programme.

22. Assessment practice is poor. Most observation of workplace practice focuses on a small part of one unit of the NVQ. There is almost no use of evidence from similar units. The range of assessment methods is limited and little use is made of oral questioning to check knowledge or understanding. There is too great an emphasis on the production of written evidence. Records of workplace practice are purely descriptive and do not identify a learner's knowledge or understanding. Level 3 portfolios do not always include sufficiently detailed evidence. Internal verification is not timely or planned with sufficient thoroughness. Many spelling mistakes in portfolios go uncorrected. Learners are not aware of their mistakes and continue to repeat them.

23. The initial assessment process is inadequate. There is no assessment of learners' basic or key skills needs at the beginning of the training programmes. For those learners seen as needing additional support, an assessment is done when the support begins, sometime after the learner has been in training. Assessors and learners are not given the results of the assessment. There is no assessment of key skills. Learners who have already achieved key skills in previous training programmes are not aware these can be accredited, nor when.

24. Arrangements for carrying out progress reviews are poor. The company's policy is for the nursery manager to carry them out monthly. This does not always happen. Records of reviews are not fully completed. Very few have clear and measurable short-term targets. The targets that are set are not always followed up within the intended timescale. Individual learning plans are not fully completed, and contain insufficient detail.

25. The company has recently bought books for learners to borrow and has taken out subscription to professional journals. Resources could be expanded to include a wider range of materials, such as distance learning packs or videos.

#### Good Practice

*During the learner's induction week, a practice fire drill is held to ensure they are aware of evacuation procedures.*