

TRAINING STANDARDS COUNCIL INSPECTION REPORT
JANUARY 2001

ADULT LEARNING INSPECTORATE REINSPECTION APRIL
2002

The Academy
(Malton) Limited
North Yorkshire



ADULT LEARNING
INSPECTORATE

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
- ◆ learning and job preparation programmes 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.

Grading

In summarising their judgements about the quality of provision in curriculum or occupational areas and about the quality of leadership and management, including quality assurance and equality of opportunity, inspectors use a five-point scale. The descriptors for the five grades are:

- ◆ grade 1 – outstanding
- ◆ grade 2 – good
- ◆ grade 3 – satisfactory
- ◆ grade 4 – unsatisfactory
- ◆ grade 5 – very weak.

SUMMARY

The original inspection of The Academy (Malton) Limited was carried out by the Training Standards Council's inspectors. The inspection resulted in less than satisfactory grades being awarded for equal opportunities, trainee support and quality assurance. These areas have been reinspected against the requirements of the *Common Inspection Framework* by the Adult Learning Inspectorate, which replaced the Training Standards Council on 1 April 2001. The sections of the original report dealing with equal opportunities, trainee support and quality assurance have been replaced with the findings of the reinspection. Also, the report summary, report introduction and introduction to the inspection findings have been updated and reflect the findings of the reinspection. Sections of the report, dealing with areas which have not been reinspected, have been left in their original form. The amended inspection report is published on the Adult Learning Inspectorate's website (www.ali.gov.uk).

The Academy (Malton) Limited offers training in hairdressing and beauty. Learners have good practical skills and learning sessions are well planned. At the time of the original inspection, the company's equal opportunities policy was inadequate, and learners' awareness of equality issues was poor. Learners now demonstrate a good level of awareness of equality issues. However, there is still insufficient staff training in this area. Learners receive good support that is tailored to their individual needs. At the time of the original inspection, learners' progress reviews were inadequate. Learners now have regular, recorded progress reviews and are set clear targets for achievement in each period of their training programme. There is effective internal communication, but insufficient use of management information. At the time of the original inspection, there was no overall quality assurance system. Since then, a new manual has been produced, with procedures for most aspects of training.

GRADES

OCCUPATIONAL AREAS	GRADE
Hair & beauty	3

GENERIC AREAS	GRADE
Equal opportunities	4
Trainee support	4
Management of training	3
Quality assurance	4

REINSPECTION	GRADE
Equal opportunities	3
Trainee support	2
Quality assurance	3

KEY STRENGTHS

- ◆ good development of learners' practical skills
- ◆ well-planned learning sessions
- ◆ good awareness by learners of equal opportunities issues
- ◆ flexible, individualised support for learners
- ◆ good monitoring and review of learners' progress
- ◆ good staff commitment to quality assurance procedures
- ◆ particularly effective internal communication

KEY WEAKNESSES

- ◆ inadequate work-based assessment
- ◆ little key skills training
- ◆ insufficient staff training in equal opportunities
- ◆ no access to specialist guidance and support
- ◆ poorly developed self-assessment process
- ◆ lack of clarity in some procedures

INTRODUCTION

1. The Academy (Malton) Limited (The Academy) is a limited company offering training solely for hairdressing. The Academy's parent company, Goodys, was established in 1979 with one commercial salon and has since expanded to five salons. In 1998, The Academy was subcontracted to give work-based learning for a local training provider. This arrangement finished and The Academy gained a direct contract with its local training and enterprise council (TEC). Since April 2001, its contract for work-based learning has been with the North Yorkshire Learning and Skills Council (LSC). The Academy's training centre is situated above one of the five salons. Other Goodys salons are located in the small towns of Kirkbymoorside, Driffield, Pickering and Norton. There are plans to relocate The Academy this year, but, at the time of the reinspection, The Academy is sharing small offices with the parent company. At the time of the original inspection, The Academy provided training for 18 learners working towards national vocational qualifications (NVQs) in hairdressing. It now provides training for 13 learners working towards foundation modern apprenticeships and advanced modern apprenticeships in hairdressing.

2. The owner of the Academy, known as the director, is responsible for business planning, quality assurance and training. At the time of the original inspection, another member of staff had responsibility for training and development. Three other members of staff train and assess for hairdressing qualifications. A local information technology (IT) centre provides training for the IT key skill award. Learners are assessed at The Academy.

3. The Academy operates in Ryedale. This is the most sparsely populated district of North Yorkshire and has a poor transport infrastructure. The area constitutes 18 per cent of North Yorkshire and the centre of Ryedale is 15 miles from York. The area has, until recently, been an area of thriving agriculture and agriculture-related industries. Towns have had lively weekend markets and local retailing and services depended on the livestock trade. Recent changes have had a negative effect on the area and there are now signs of decline, such as empty shops and buildings. Traditional employment in agriculture has sharply declined and the once buoyant tourism sector is waning. There has been growth in personal service occupations over the past decade and this growth is expected to continue. Ryedale District Council has been successful in bidding for funding to provide services to people in the 10 to 29 age range from the Single Regeneration Budget (SRB). It hopes to stem the migration of young people, which is having a detrimental effect on the local economy. Businesses have difficulties in recruiting skilled workers. Since the time of the original inspection in January 2001, the foot and mouth epidemic has had a further adverse effect on the local economy.

4. Most learners are recruited from the Ryedale area. Ryedale has four secondary schools and, at the time of the original inspection, 53.5 per cent of school leavers

achieved five or more general certificates of secondary education (GCSEs) at grade C or above, compared with the national average of 49.2 per cent. At the time of the reinspection, this proportion had risen to 57 per cent, compared with the national average of 47.9 per cent. Less than 1 per cent of the population of Ryedale is from minority ethnic groups, according to the 1991 census. The Ryedale area had an unemployment rate of 1.5 per cent in October 2001, compared with the national average of approximately 3 per cent.

INSPECTION FINDINGS

5. The Academy produced its first self-assessment report in June 2000, following a quality audit by the TEC. The director and the training and development director wrote the self-assessment report, taking into account learners' views. The Academy's managers were asked to comment on the finished report, but they were given little feedback on their contribution. The Academy did not fully understand the implications of the self-assessment process and the first self-assessment report was not properly linked to the quality statements in *Raising the Standard*. Several strengths and weaknesses appeared in inappropriate sections of the report. Many of the strengths were no more than normal practice. Although the self-assessment report identified some weaknesses, it did not reflect other significant weaknesses found by inspectors. The Academy gave higher grades than the inspectors for four areas. The action plan was unclear. It contained no indicators for measuring the effectiveness of actions. Some targets for actions were not met, and some actions which should have been carried out by December 2000, had not been completed by the time of the original inspection. A second self-assessment report was produced in January 2002.

6. The original inspection was carried out by a team of three inspectors, who spent a total of 12 days at The Academy's premises during January 2001. They visited work placements, and met learners, training staff, managers and salon owners. They also studied all relevant policies, procedures and documents. Inspectors interviewed 16 learners, and conducted 15 interviews with staff. They met two workplace managers and supervisors and visited six work placements. They observed four learning sessions and one assessment. The reinspection was carried out by two inspectors who spent a total of six days at The Academy in April 2002. They visited seven work placements, and interviewed 13 learners, 12 Academy staff and one employer. They also looked at 13 individual learning plans and six learners' portfolios, as well as The Academy's policies, procedures and records. No instruction sessions were observed at the reinspection.

Grades awarded to instruction sessions at the original inspection

	GRADE 1	GRADE 2	GRADE 3	GRADE 4	GRADE 5	TOTAL
Hair & beauty		2	3			5
Total	0	2	3	0	0	5

OCCUPATIONAL AREAS

Hairdressing

Grade 3

7. The Academy offers training in hairdressing only. Trainees have the opportunity to study additional skills such as barbering. Trainees are either modern apprentices or national trainees and study for NVQs at levels 2 and 3. There are 18 trainees: nine are modern apprentices and nine are national trainees. No trainees are endorsed as having special training needs. Seventeen trainees are employed. There is one training centre, or training academy, situated above one of The Academics' five salons. Trainees working towards NVQs at level 2 attend the training academy in Malton for one day each week and trainees working towards level 3 NVQs attend for one day each month. The learning programme includes theory, practical and tutorial sessions. Four days are spent working in local commercial salons, where trainers visit them to review their progress. Five of the placement salons belong to the company and two other salons are used as work placements.

8. Seven trainees are based at the academy: two are full time, two are part time and the remaining three are self-employed. Except for one self-employed trainer, all staff spend some of their week in The Academics' commercial salons. Six trainers are responsible for hairdressing training and one is responsible for training in the key skill of information technology for key skills. All trainers are occupationally competent. Five have relevant qualifications in training and assessing but two have no relevant qualifications.

9. No data on achievement rates were available for previous years. The Academy has offered government-funded training for 15 months and to date four modern apprentices hope to achieve their framework in February 2001, 16 months after starting the programme. Other trainees are expected to complete their programme within 20 months of starting. The retention rate is 66 per cent. The self-assessment report accurately identified the good use of resources as a strength. Three of the five weaknesses were more appropriate to other areas of the report. Inspectors identified some additional strengths and weaknesses, and awarded a grade lower than that given by the company.

STRENGTHS

- ◆ good development of trainees' practical skills
- ◆ well-planned learning sessions
- ◆ innovative use of resources

WEAKNESSES

- ◆ inadequate work-based assessment
- ◆ little key skills training

10. Training at The Academy is well planned and effective. There is an annual plan for theory sessions. The training methods and the pace are varied to maintain trainees' interest and trainees' participation is encouraged. All trainees are encouraged to share their relevant experiences. Trainers produce lesson plans for theory sessions with identified objectives, activities and timetables. The plans for practical sessions, run in the commercial salons with clients, identify in general terms which assessments should be completed in a given timescale. All trainees have opportunities for additional training, including barbering, manicure, Shiatsu massage and ear piercing. Most of this additional training is given in house and does not lead to nationally recognised certificates.

11. Salon managers are kept informed of their trainees' progress at monthly management meetings. Trainees' progress and a report from the training and development director are standing agenda items at this meeting, which allows salon managers to comment on and compare trainees' progress. These discussions are not always minuted, and actions are not agreed on. Only staff employed in the Academy's salons are invited to this meeting and it does not cover trainees in other salons.

12. Assessment in the workplace is not satisfactory. Although some salon managers are qualified assessors, they do not assess trainees. Trainees can ask training staff to visit them in the salons if they wish to be assessed but this rarely happens. The Academy has recognised the need for assessments in the workplace. A visiting assessor has recently been appointed to mark assignments and complete assessments in the workplace one day each week, and salon managers have been given the opportunity to gain assessors' qualifications. It is too early to assess the effectiveness of these strategies. At The Academy, there is a satisfactory range of clients for trainees to work on but this is not a substitute for assessment using naturally occurring evidence in the workplace. Suitable clients are not always available for specific assessments and trainees' progress in covering all aspects of the NVQ range is hindered.

13. The training academy is small, but satisfactorily equipped. The salon is large enough for eight trainees to work on one client each. This means groups are small and trainees have individual attention. The salon is light, clean and recently decorated and equipped with a video and flip chart. Textbooks are available for trainees. The equipment and small tools provided are of a commercial standard. The range of commercial products which trainees use is the same as that used in The Academy's commercial salons. There is no separate room for sessions in theory and one-to-one sessions with trainers, and the salon at the training academy is used for theory training, with trainees using foldaway desks. A portable commercial colour station is used to create a demonstration area when required. The innovative use of the small salon creates a suitable environment for training.

14. Although all the trainees are foundation or advanced modern apprentices, for whom key skills is an important part of their training programme, the trainees have been poorly informed about key skills by their assessors. Many trainees are

unaware which key skills they are taking. They do not gather evidence towards their key skills units. There are plans to rectify this. A part-time member of staff has recently been appointed to internally verify key skills and external verification was planned for February 2001. However, trainees have been denied valuable opportunities to gather naturally occurring key skills evidence, and to understand the importance of key skills and their relationship to the rest of the programme. Workplace supervisors have no knowledge of key skills and there is no integration of key skills into workplace activities. Trainees do not understand the transferable nature of key skills and cannot relate them to their workplace. Trainees undertake a 10-week course, for two hours each week, and gain a basic, nationally recognised qualification in information technology. This is not started until the second year of training, which is too late for trainees to be able to use the knowledge in other areas of their training. Trainees believe that the information technology course constitutes the whole of their key skills training.

15. Trainees demonstrate a high level of practical competence for their time in training. They are enthusiastic and well motivated. They work with confidence and as they become more competent they are encouraged to progress to working on paying clients. Trainees are encouraged to participate in local and national competitions and have had regular success at these events. Professionally produced photographs of the competition models are displayed in all The Academy salons and the training academy. Some photographs of trainee's work have also been reproduced in national hairdressing magazines. Trainees' portfolios are well presented. A satisfactory variety of evidence is accumulated and used to demonstrate the completion of assessments. This includes validated witness testimonies and clients' comments. Trainees understand their part in the assessment process. They agree with the trainer at the training academy when they will be assessed. Assessment is carried out according to the awarding body's guidelines. The assessor asks questions as soon as possible after the trainee has completed the practical work. Feedback given to trainees is clear about trainees' achievements and where improvements are needed. Internal verification is satisfactory.

GENERIC AREAS

Equal opportunities

Grade 3

16. The Academy has an equal opportunities policy. It is included in the learners' induction handbook and a copy is displayed on all staff notice boards in The Academy's salons. The policy was updated in January 2002. The director is responsible for equal opportunities. The company collects data on recruitment of staff and learners in terms of gender, age and ethnicity. All the learners are women. The training centre's staff comprise eight women and one man. At the original inspection, the self-assessment report identified three strengths, two of which the inspectors considered to be no more than normal practice. Of the four weaknesses identified, two were matched by inspectors. An additional weakness

relating to lack of staff training in equal opportunities was found by inspectors.

At the original inspection, the main weaknesses identified were:

- ◆ inadequate equal opportunities policy
- ◆ insufficient staff training in equal opportunities
- ◆ poor understanding of equal opportunities by trainees

17. At the reinspection, inspectors considered that learners' awareness of equal opportunities was greatly improved and is now a strength. A clear policy for equal opportunities has been introduced. There has been considerable raising of staff awareness of equality of opportunity issues, but weaknesses remain in this area.

STRENGTHS

- ◆ action to recruit from under-represented groups
- ◆ good awareness of equal opportunities issues by learners

WEAKNESSES

- ◆ insufficient staff training in equal opportunities

18. The Academy has taken steps to address the gender imbalance on its training programmes. Representatives from The Academy attend local careers conventions and school open days. These events allow staff from The Academy, accompanied by current learners, to demonstrate their practical skills and raise the profile of the industry. One male hairdresser, who recently qualified with The Academy, attends the events and there are opportunities for potential male recruits to discuss any concerns. The Academy uses its own video as a marketing tool and a new leaflet advertising the training is being developed. In both instances, positive images are used to attract under-represented groups. The Academy has close links with local schools. An after-school club has been introduced for young people considering hairdressing as a career. Ten-week taster courses in basic hairdressing skills are well attended and have resulted in some recruitment. Links have recently been formed with a local business partnership which has traditionally struggled to encourage women onto engineering programmes. This arrangement allows both organisations to access a broader range of potential learners. A taster course has been specifically designed for potential male learners who have currently applied for engineering programmes with the business partnership.

19. There are no barriers to access for learners with disabilities or learners from minority ethnic groups. One young person from South Korea was offered the opportunity to update her skills as a fully qualified hairdresser and beautician. Another applicant, who used a wheelchair, was supported by The Academy in finding a suitable work placement. Continued support was given when the learner herself identified that her disabilities prevented her from completing her training. The Academy helped her to make a smooth transition to a local training programme in business administration. Some of The Academy's premises are not

accessible for learners with restricted mobility. Arrangements can be made for learners to work downstairs in The Academy's commercial salon.

20. The equal opportunities policy has been recently revised and updated. The Academy has consulted with the North Yorkshire LSC and with other training companies locally to ensure that its policy reflects best practice. The policy covers all relevant legislation and includes a separate section on harassment. However, the section on disability is weak, with no mention of access issues or the adaptation of working practices to meet the needs of disabled people. The policy has been widely circulated, and a policy statement appears on all staff notice boards. Staff and learners are well aware of the existence of the policy. Some aspects of the policy have not yet been put into practice. For example, there is a clause setting out arrangements for a group of staff to review the operation of the policy, but this has not been set up. The policy does not specify target dates for review, or record reviews which have been carried out. The company collects equal opportunities data on recruitment of staff and learners, but does not set specific targets or performance indicators for recruiting from under-represented groups.

21. Learners have a good understanding of equal opportunities. The Academy's induction includes a video presentation on this topic, followed by discussion and a written assignment. Learners had a good recall of this induction, and were aware of procedures for raising complaints and grievance issues. These issues are regularly reinforced during learners' reviews.

22. All staff have taken part in an awareness-raising session on equal opportunities, using the same training materials as are used in the learners' induction. Apart from this, there has been no specific equal opportunities training for The Academy's staff. Equality of opportunity is now a standing item for staff meetings. Staff awareness of equal opportunities in general is satisfactory, but the expertise needed to carry out aspects of the policy, such as incorporation of equality issues into the curriculum, has not yet been developed. A programme of staff development in this area is included in the company's latest development plan.

Trainee support

Grade 2

23. Support for learners is the responsibility of the director. Learners are referred to The Academy by local schools and the careers service and through direct recruitment. All applicants are interviewed and complete a health questionnaire. An initial assessment of the learners' competence in literacy and numeracy is carried out at induction and learners are informed of the results. Learners are informally assessed for their occupational suitability during induction. Learners' additional learning needs are identified and the relevant support is organised. Links with external support agencies have been formed. Learners receive an induction on joining the programme and receive an induction handbook. The most

recent self-assessment report proposed a grade lower than that awarded by the inspectors. The learner support section within it included a number of strengths and weaknesses which were not related to learner support.

At the original inspection, the main weaknesses identified were:

- ◆ ineffective initial assessment
- ◆ poor use of individual learning plans
- ◆ inadequate progress reviews

24. The Academy has taken action in all of these areas. A literacy and numeracy test has been introduced and individual learning plans are now used to tailor the training to each learner's needs. They are no longer weaknesses. An effective and thorough progress review procedure is now in operation and this is now a strength.

STRENGTHS

- ◆ flexible, individualised support for learners
- ◆ celebration of learners' success
- ◆ good monitoring and review of learners' progress

WEAKNESSES

- ◆ no access to specialist guidance and support

25. Staff at The Academy give close consideration to the individual needs of learners and ensure that support is available. A thorough initial induction procedure ensures that learners' individual needs are identified and that they are given appropriate support. Learners are now more confident in their choice of vocational programme and fewer learners leave early. Problems affecting learning, including learners' personal difficulties, are dealt with promptly. Learners with disabilities discuss their needs with the director. One learner, who had a back problem following an accident, found it difficult to stand for a full day and was allowed to attend The Academy for training on half days. Another learner, who was diagnosed as having dyspraxia, was given individual learning sessions and offered weekly support from a local association. The Academy offers a wide range of competition and photographic work for those learners who intend to become involved in this area. One learner who had entered a national competition was unable to use public transport because she was temporarily using a wheelchair. The Academy's staff arranged with the organisers of the competition so that the learner could compete. Ramps were set up to the stage and a hydraulic chair was made available. The Academy's staff provided transport to get her to the event. Learners are given information at induction on career paths for hairdressers, but there is little information or guidance on jobseeking and no access to specialist careers guidance. Learners and tutors are not given information on external sources of specialist support such as personal counselling.

26. Learners' success is publicly celebrated. There is an annual event when

learners are presented with awards gained throughout the year. The presentation is made by a local hairdressing celebrity and this gives the event a high profile. Throughout the year, there are press releases on the many competitions the learners take part in at local, national or international levels. It is not only winners who are recognised. Learners showing particular progress in their work are recognised for their efforts.

27. Learners at The Academy are valued as members of its staff. They are given the opportunity to work on paying clients as soon as they are competent and to have their own clients. The learners are included in the commission and bonus schemes which operate for sales above the basic rate. Learners are motivated to build their clientele. Salon managers appraise all salon staff every six months and learners working at The Academy have the same opportunity to be appraised.

28. Initial assessment procedures have been significantly improved since the original inspection. Any difficulties with literacy or numeracy are identified at an early stage. Prior experience is not always accredited and there is no accreditation of prior learning for key skills. There is no formal testing for learners' ability in key skills, but learners receive much personal support in this area, as well as taking part in group training sessions. There are no formal arrangements to provide for those with additional learning needs, though informal arrangements for individual coaching are made when required.

29. Appropriate individual learning and action plans are drawn up at induction, drawing on all the information gathered about the learner. Detailed information is kept about learners. Target dates for completion of NVQ units are kept under regular review and updated on the learners' action plans.

30. There are thorough and effective procedures for monitoring and reviewing learners' progress. The director carries out progress reviews with each learner every 12 weeks, and the outcomes are discussed with the learner's manager. Appropriate follow-up action is taken in the workplace to help the learner make progress. The Academy's salon managers meet the training and development director regularly to receive feedback on their particular learners and reports on the learners are completed by The Academy each term and sent to the salons. Information from progress reviews is used to update individual learning plans. The marking tutor returns learners' written work with constructive comments and with clear guidance on improvements needed.

Management of training

Grade 3

31. The training academy is based on the second floor above one of The Academy's five commercial salons. Of the 50 staff employed by the business as a whole, seven are involved in training and assessment. The group director acts as assessor, internal verifier and quality assurance co-ordinator, and also takes strategic responsibility for financial management and business-planning within

The Academy as a whole. The training and development director has operational responsibility for training, assessment and TEC contracts. A further four members of staff train and assess in hairdressing. A freelance consultant provides a separate 10-week training course on the key skill of information technology. All training academy staff have job descriptions. They receive a copy of the staff handbook when they join The Academy. Employees are appraised twice each year. The Academy was successfully reassessed for the Investors in People standard in March 1998. The self-assessment report provides some brief contextual information for this aspect of training. Most of the strengths identified by The Academy represent no more than contractual compliance. One of the weaknesses identified in the self-assessment report is more appropriate to trainee support. The other weaknesses had been rectified by the time of inspection. Inspectors found other strengths and weaknesses. The grade awarded is the same as that given in the self-assessment report.

STRENGTHS

- ◆ particularly effective internal communication
- ◆ good external networking
- ◆ well-focused staff development

WEAKNESSES

- ◆ inadequate development plan
- ◆ unsystematic staff induction
- ◆ insufficient use of management information

32. Communication within the training academy, and between the training academy and The Academy's salons, is regular and well organised. Trainers and assessors meet once each month to discuss the progress of trainees and practical training issues. Meetings of all staff at The Academy are regular and well attended. Each salon has a minuted team meeting once a week. Salon managers meet once a month. At both these meetings, issues relating to training and trainees are included, although not always minuted. These meetings are also well attended. The minutes of the salon managers' meetings are comprehensive and are written to be understandable to employees and trainees. They include reference to staff and trainees' achievements, and thanks to those who have made a particular contribution during that month. All staff at The Academy receive the minutes of the salon managers' meetings, and freelance staff have recently begun to receive copies of the minutes at their homes. Between meetings, employees are kept well informed through memorandums and briefings. They are routinely consulted about important issues. For example, staff and trainees have been invited to contribute ideas regarding the wording of a mission statement for The Academy. Staff feel well informed and are very clear about their roles with regard both to the training academy and to The Academy as a whole.

33. The Academy's directors network effectively with external agencies and

companies. The group director and the training and development director have attended several meetings of a local business partnership, attended by other local training companies. They have sought the advice of other training companies on issues such as internal verification. The Academy is in frequent contact with the local press and provides newspapers with press releases and invitations to photographic shoots. Newspapers give The Academy regular, positive publicity about its activities and trainees' achievements at competitions.

34. Opportunities for staff development are readily available to all staff at The Academy. Training is linked to the needs of the organisation as well as the individual. Staff are encouraged to attend courses aimed at improving their practical or training skills. The training and development director has recently completed a survey of the professional development needs of all The Academy's staff. She has used this as the basis of a comprehensive staff development plan, which lists a range of short courses on offer to both staff and trainees. The courses include practical topics, such as cutting and colouring, and wider issues, such as management. Employees receive a twice-yearly appraisal, which focuses on their achievement, any barriers to their progress, and their professional development needs. The group director scrutinises all appraisal records. Staff value the opportunities to develop their skills and to improve their performance.

35. The training academy is included in The Academy's development plan, which is updated annually. This outlines the business's objectives for the year and the ways in which they can be achieved. It is very brief and lacks necessary detail. There is no reference to progress against previous development plans. The objectives outlined are not always clear and are not quantified. For example, one objective refers to the need for salons to attract more clients but does not indicate by how much. None of the objectives relates clearly to training or assessment. It is not clear how the actions identified are intended to meet the objectives. For example, none of the actions specified relates to attracting more clients. There are no timescales and there is no identification of those people responsible for carrying out the actions. The business plan is insufficient as an indicator of The Academy's strategic objectives and how to achieve them.

36. Over the past few months, three of The Academy employees have taken on responsibility for training or assessing in the training academy. The training and development director is working with them to introduce them to the training academy's working methods. She discusses schemes of work and learning sessions with them, and shows them how to complete documents. This is not however a formal induction and is not carried out in a systematic way. There is no staff induction procedure or check-list to ensure that staff new to The Academy receive all the information they need, or that they have demonstrated full competence in all aspects of their job role before being expected to carry it out without supervision. Two freelance consultants have recently been invited to work for the training academy on a sessional basis: one as a key skills internal verifier and the other as a trainer in the key skill of information technology. Neither of these has been given any form of induction.

37. The Academy has a management-information system provided by the TEC. The Academy uses this to administer its claim to the TEC. It makes no other use of the system. The Academy collects data about the recruitment, achievement and destinations of trainees. Staff members have detailed knowledge of why particular individuals withdraw their applications for learning programmes, or leave before they have completed their training. But managers do not analyse these data to establish trends. They do not use them for decision-making or to improve training. Data are not used to define the business's strategic objectives or to produce its business plan.

Quality assurance

Grade 3

38. The company has introduced a new quality assurance manual since the original inspection. It contains policies and procedures for staff. The director is responsible for quality assurance across The Academy. The company holds the Investors in People award, a national standard for improving an organisation's performance through its people. Most internal verification is carried out by a part-time consultant. Feedback is sought from learners after most learning sessions and at the end of each term. The director and two senior staff wrote the most recent self-assessment report in January 2002. The views of learners were gathered and included in the report. The draft self-assessment report was circulated to salon managers, who were asked to complete a sheet giving their views about it. At the original inspection, the background information provided in the self-assessment report for this aspect of training was inaccurate in places. The three strengths identified represented no more than normal practice. The weaknesses were expressed as actions to be taken. Inspectors found additional strengths and weaknesses. The grade awarded by inspectors at the original inspection was lower than that given in the self-assessment report.

At the original inspection, the main weaknesses identified were:

- ◆ no overall quality assurance system
- ◆ insufficient internal verification by observation of training and assessment

39. By the time of the reinspection, these weaknesses had been resolved and are now satisfactory. A quality assurance policy has been introduced. Although it has only recently been published, inspectors found that a large number of staff had contributed to its development. There is a good awareness of the policy among staff. A consultant has been employed to carry out internal verification, which is now satisfactory. All portfolios show observation of practical assessments by the verifier. At the reinspection, inspectors identified additional strengths and weaknesses.

STRENGTHS

- ◆ good staff commitment to quality assurance procedures

- ◆ good procedures for obtaining and using feedback from learners
- ◆ effective appraisal system

WEAKNESSES

- ◆ lack of clarity in some procedures
- ◆ poorly developed self-assessment process

40. At the time of the original inspection, the company had written policies and procedures for some aspects of training and assessment that were neither clear nor comprehensive. There were no policies or procedures for important elements of training and assessment, such as initial assessment, the accreditation of prior learning, or learners' progress reviews, and no overall quality assurance policy. By the time of the reinspection, the company had developed new policies and procedures for quality assurance. Many training staff have contributed to their formulation and there is good awareness of the policy and a commitment to making the procedures work for the benefit of learners. Most of the new procedures are clear and well written, but some do not provide sufficiently detailed or accurate guidelines about how these processes should be carried out. Most procedures incorporate checking mechanisms to ensure they are carried out.

41. The Academy's trainers routinely ask learners for feedback about learning sessions. Learners are also asked to provide written feedback about the training provided for each unit of the NVQ. At the time of the original inspection, there were plans to collect learners' views at key stages of their programme. As a result, learners now complete questionnaires about the quality of their training after their induction and then once a term. The results are analysed by the director, and key points are noted. The feedback is discussed by trainers and assessors, and is used to improve the quality of training. For example, learners' feedback suggested that the key skills course in IT was not long enough. Its length was increased from six weeks to 10 weeks. A group of modern apprentices objected to the timing of one of their off-the-job learning sessions, which took place in the evening. They found it difficult to concentrate after a full day's work. The session was moved to an earlier time. More recently, additional practical sessions have been provided in the evenings in response to feedback from learners.

42. The Academy has well developed systems for supporting its part-time staff, based around the appraisal system. Trainers and salon managers meet with the director twice a year to discuss their work. The member of staff who is being appraised completes a pre-meeting questionnaire and this is used as a basis for the discussion, together with information such as the results of lesson observations and feedback from learners. Records show that these discussions are constructive and helpful. Staff development needs are often identified as a result of this process, and most trainers have recently attended courses to update their skills.

43. The internal verification of hairdressing NVQs is carried out by a freelance consultant who also acts as a part-time tutor. Internal verification of learners' portfolios is satisfactory. It takes place at regular intervals and involves a suitable

sample of learners, assessors and units and elements of the NVQ, or key skills. The process is thorough and clearly recorded. Written and verbal feedback is provided for assessors. This gives brief information about the quantity of evidence and the quality of the portfolio overall. At the time of the original inspection, The Academy's internal verifiers did not observe assessments. This has now been rectified, and the full range of assessment types is now verified. The verifier gives assessors guidance on developing their technique or improving their performance, and holds regular standardisation meetings to ensure consistency of assessment practice. At the time of the original inspection, The Academy had no structure for the observation of training. Now, the director observes all trainers, and gives written and verbal feedback. Any issues arising from these observations are taken forward into the appraisal system.

44. The Academy's self-assessment process is poorly developed. A draft report is produced by the director and this is then discussed with staff. Staff teams do not carry out their own self-assessment, and data such as achievement and retention rates are not taken into account. Not all staff have been involved in the most recent self-assessment report, and learners are not involved, although the views they express as part of their feedback are taken into account. The self-assessment report is objective in tone. It makes some attempt at critical evaluation, and accurately identifies some weaknesses. The report includes some items in inappropriate sections, for instance issues concerned with assessment appear under learner support.