

INSPECTION REPORT

McArthur Dean Training Limited Reinspection

05 November 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. The same scale is used to describe the quality of leadership and management, which includes quality assurance and equality of opportunity. The descriptors for the five grades are:

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

The two grading scales relate to each other as follows:

SEVEN-POINT SCALE	FIVE-POINT SCALE
grade 1	grade 1
grade 2	
grade 3	grade 2
grade 4	grade 3
grade 5	grade 4
grade 6	grade 5
grade 7	

Adult Learning Inspectorate

The Adult Learning Inspectorate (ALI) was established under the provisions of the *Learning and Skills Act 2000* to bring the inspection of all aspects of adult learning and work-based training within the remit of a single inspectorate. The ALI is responsible for inspecting a wide range of government-funded learning, including:

- work-based training for all people over 16
- provision in further education colleges for people aged 19 and over
- the University for Industry's **learnirect** provision
- Adult and Community Learning
- 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.

The reinspection process for inadequate provision

Provision which is deemed to be inadequate (where more than one third of occupational/curriculum areas or leadership and management are judged to be less than satisfactory) is subject to a reinspection of all aspects of the provision. A full report will be published.

In those cases where the overall judgement is that the provision is adequate, only those aspects of the provision which are less than satisfactory will be reinspected and reported on.

The aim is to complete the inspection process within one year of the publication of the original inspection report. Large or complex reinspections may take longer, but in no case will the process last more than two years.

If, at the end of the reinspection process, any aspect of the provision is found to be less than satisfactory, the ALI will refer the provider to the Learning and Skills Council (LSC)/Jobcentre Plus for emergency action.

SUMMARY

The provider

McArthur Dean Training Limited is a private limited company based in Hull and founded in 1995. It offers work-based learning for 143 young people in the business administration, management and professional area of learning. It also provides training in customer service but at the time of the reinspection there were only two learners in this area, too few for it to be inspected. The business administration training includes accounting and some legal qualifications. Learners follow foundation and advanced modern apprenticeships as well as national vocational qualifications (NVQs). All the current learners are modern apprentices. Training is funded through a contract with the Humberside Learning and Skills Council.

The company has nine staff including two directors. One director has overall responsibility for training, while the other focuses on marketing. Day-release training is provided by tutor/trainers at McArthur Dean Training Limited's premises. Most learners attend for a half day each week.

Overall judgement

At the previous inspection of McArthur Dean Training Limited, inspectors judged that business administration, management and professional training was satisfactory, as was equality of opportunity. The company's leadership and management and quality assurance were, however, unsatisfactory. At the end of the reinspection process, all aspects of the provision were found to be satisfactory or better.

Grades awarded

	Original	Reinspection
Leadership and management	4	3
Contributory grades:		
Equality of opportunity	3	2
Quality assurance	4	3

	Original	Reinspection
Business administration, management & professional	3	3
Contributory grades:		
Work-based learning for young people	3	3

During the reinspection process, the inspection team identified the following key strengths, weaknesses and other improvements needed:

KEY STRENGTHS

- good action and development plan

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- good support for learners
- effective work placements, offering learners good opportunities to progress into employment

KEY WEAKNESSES

- poor use of management information in decision-making
- poor achievement rate for modern apprentices

OTHER IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED

- more detailed minutes of staff meetings

THE REINSPECTION

1. Three inspectors spent a total of nine days reinspecting McArthur Dean Training Limited (McArthur Dean) in November 2002. They observed and graded three training sessions. They interviewed 27 learners during off-the-job training sessions and at their workplaces. They examined the new self-assessment report, which McArthur Dean had produced for the reinspection, and the action and development plan which was written after the previous inspection. They also looked at a range of the company's paperwork including the new policies manual, and at 13 learners' portfolios.

Grades awarded to learning sessions at the original inspection

	Grade 1	Grade 2	Grade 3	Grade 4	Grade 5	Grade 6	Grade 7	Total
TSC Business administration	0	1	0	2	2	0	0	5
Total	0	1	0	2	2	0	0	5

Grades awarded to learning sessions at reinspection

	Grade 1	Grade 2	Grade 3	Grade 4	Grade 5	Grade 6	Grade 7	Total
Business administration, management & professional	0	0	2	1	0	0	0	3
Total	0	0	2	1	0	0	0	3

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

Grade 3

During the reinspection process, the inspection team identified the following strengths, weaknesses and other improvements needed:

STRENGTHS

- detailed and clearly focused business and marketing plans
- good action and development plan
- positive action to ensure equality of opportunity for learners in the workplace
- good support for learners
- effective quality assurance system

WEAKNESSES

- poor use of management information in decision-making
- insufficiently focused staff appraisal documents
- weak internal verification

OTHER IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED

- more detailed minutes of staff meetings
- more qualified assessors and internal verifiers

2. All McArthur Dean's staff are involved in the development of the company's business and marketing plans. The plans focus on increasing growth and development as well as on a commitment to provide good-quality services for the learners. There are realistic and achievable targets for learners' retention and achievement rates, and for increased participation by under-represented groups.

3. McArthur Dean has a good, extensive action and development plan which covers all the main areas of the business. It is designed to remedy the weaknesses identified in the previous inspection, and to build on the strengths, and has led to considerable improvement in the service to learners. Responsibility is clearly allocated to individuals, with target completion dates as well as intermediate milestones. Progress is monitored at monthly staff meetings and weekly team meetings.

4. McArthur Dean's management information system does not allow easy access to accurate data. The numbers of new starts and leavers are monitored monthly, but the figures are not consolidated and analysed to indicate trends or identify improvements in performance. Learners' achievement of NVQ units is monitored by using a spreadsheet. This is limited in value as it does not allow complex comparisons of data, or checking of learners' progress against their expected completion dates.

5. The document McArthur Dean uses for staff appraisals is insufficiently focused on individuals. It contains generic questions which do not relate sufficiently to specific job roles. The same form is used by both staff and the line manager in an appraisal and that this is insufficiently focused on the job role. The forms are undermined further by grammatical, and other, errors.

6. Minutes are taken at most staff meetings. These do not always fully reflect the depth or detail of the discussion that takes place.

7. There is only one assessor and one internal verifier. Two more staff are currently being trained as assessors, and one as an internal verifier.

Equality of opportunity

Contributory grade 2

8. McArthur Dean has an up-to-date equal opportunities policy. All learners receive a copy of this and the grievance procedure. Learners have a good understanding of equal opportunities and this is reinforced during regular visits by their Connexions personal adviser. Equal opportunities was covered in some of the training sessions observed during the inspection. The learners' review records confirm that equal opportunities is discussed regularly.

9. McArthur Dean takes positive action to enforce equality of opportunity for learners in the workplace. The company provides an open surgery at the training centre every month, at which learners are encouraged to discuss equality of opportunity issues with their Connexions personal adviser. These range from harassment and bullying to personal and family matters. Complaints and grievances are dealt with effectively. When an employer discriminated against a learner with dyslexia, McArthur Dean found her another work placement. The company no longer places learners with that employer. An incident of bullying by a learner's manager has been resolved to the satisfaction of the learner and the employer.

10. McArthur Dean provides good support for learners. Training sessions have been arranged at weekends for learners who cannot attend during the week. Two learners who could not travel to the training centre in Hull were given training at their employers' premises. Learners have been supported to continue with their training after their funding from the Learning and Skills Council (LSC) has finished.

11. The company is developing an equal opportunities strategy which includes setting realistic targets for participation in training by under-represented groups. A recent recruitment campaign on local radio featured a male voice to try to attract men into an occupational sector which is dominated by women. Recruitment procedures are designed to ensure equality of opportunity. Data on equality of opportunity are collected and used to develop recruitment strategy.

Quality assurance

Contributory grade 3

12. McArthur Dean's quality assurance policy is defined in a comprehensive, new procedures manual, which was developed following the inspection of May 2001. The procedures manual consists of sections on staff, the company's procedures and policies, training, learners, and documents. It also includes the quality assurance policy. Staff were consulted during the preparation of the manual, and a junior member of staff, who is herself a modern apprentice, made a major contribution to the learners' section. All learners receive a copy of the learners' section, which includes the equal opportunities policy and the grievance procedure.

13. McArthur Dean's procedures and policies are effective in monitoring the quality of its provision. The evaluation manual for quality control contains an annual schedule for most of the company's quality monitoring events. These include checks on employers' files, observation of trainers, and learners' progress reviews. There are monitoring forms which require action points to be identified. The monitoring is effective, and has indicated shortcomings in the quality of teaching, which have now been dealt with. Fifteen learners' files are selected randomly each week and checked as part of the monitoring process.

14. Health and safety checks are carried out on employers using a new, comprehensive and detailed form, which identifies action points for improvement. There are timescales to the action points and advice is offered to help employers comply with them. Action points are checked at the bi-monthly review meetings or at a separate visit to the employer if the action point is serious or urgent. Health and safety checks include a risk assessment, and identify any problems with access for people with restricted mobility. The results are reported back to employers.

15. The director of training is responsible for maintaining the evaluation manual. A quality assurance working party has been set up, comprising the director and the general manager. The records and minutes of the quality assurance working party meetings are poor. Quality assurance is discussed at monthly staff meetings, which are well minuted. Quality assurance is not a standard agenda item, but is discussed under topics such as recruitment and retention.

16. McArthur Dean's internal verification is weak. It does not meet all the requirements of the awarding body. There is no regular observation of assessment. Although there are regular meetings between the internal verifier and the qualified assessor, the records of these meetings are poor and often refer to learners' performance and evidence rather than to the quality of the assessment. There is no reference to the national standards for assessment, or to the assessor's performance against these standards. These shortcomings were identified in an external verifier's report in January 2002. Paperwork provided by the awarding body for checking assessors' performance has only been used once in the past year. There are no formal minuted meetings between the internal verifier and the assessors. There is good informal communication between all the trainers and assessors.

17. The self-assessment process involved all staff, as well as learners on work placements at McArthur Dean. The report was written against 'Raising the Standard' and the 'Common Inspection Framework'. It identifies strengths, weaknesses and other improvements needed. Inspectors agreed with some strengths identified, but considered many to be normal practice. Inspectors did not agree with some of the grades McArthur Dean awarded itself.

Good Practice

A learner suffered discrimination by her employer after she was diagnosed as being dyslexic. She had made satisfactory progress in an administrative role, but after diagnosis her employer wanted to transfer her from administration. After support and guidance, the learner left her job and was offered temporary employment by McArthur Dean. The company then actively searched and found her a suitable job with a firm of solicitors.

AREAS OF LEARNING

Business administration, management & professional

Grade 3

Programmes inspected	Number of learners	Contributory grade
Work-based learning for young people	143	3

During the reinspection process, the inspection team identified the following strengths, weaknesses and other improvements needed:

STRENGTHS

- good retention rate for foundation modern apprentices
- effective work placements, offering learners good opportunities to progress into employment
- effective off-the-job training
- good opportunities for additional training

WEAKNESSES

- poor achievement rate for modern apprentices

OTHER IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED

- wider range of evidence of learners' competences
- more individualised learning

18. Retention rates for foundation modern apprentices are good. Of the 50 learners who started foundation modern apprenticeships between 1999 and 2001, 54 per cent were retained for the planned duration of their programmes. A further 14 per cent are still in learning. Of the 65 who started programmes in 2001-02, 70 per cent are still in learning.

19. Learners who are not employed are found work placements which offer them good opportunities to succeed. McArthur Dean uses its strong working relationships with local employers to identify suitable vacancies. Learners carry out a wide range of activities, and develop their NVQ competences and key skills. Employers support their learners by helping them to learn at work. Where necessary, they arrange for them to gain experience of tasks outside their normal jobs. They release them for half a day each week for training at McArthur Dean. Learners' progress reviews take place in the

workplace every eight weeks. Workplace supervisors attend the reviews with learners and their tutors. All three understand and agree what they need to do for the programme to be completed successfully. Individual learning plans are updated with the results of assessments. There is good action-planning, and any actual or potential difficulties are dealt with. Employers recognise the value to themselves of their learners achieving NVQ and key skills units. Some learners progress rapidly to more responsible roles at work. Most are offered permanent jobs before the end of their work placements. This year, 72 per cent of foundation and 98 per cent of advanced modern apprentices have been employed.

20. McArthur Dean and the employers provide learners with good off-the-job training in administration, accounting and key skills. Attendance is high at most training sessions. Formal training classes are well planned and presented. Trainers actively involve all learners in the learning process. They use clear handouts and well designed visual aids. Classrooms are large, well lit and equipped with good quality training aids and furniture. Up-to-date computer hardware and software is available. Trainers prepare learners well for their accounting exams and key skills tests. Learners interviewed said that the classroom sessions equip them well with the knowledge and understanding they need to achieve their NVQs. Individual attention is given to learners during group sessions to prevent them from falling behind. Additional tuition is freely offered outside normal working hours. Well-planned key skills training is integrated closely with NVQ training in classroom sessions and during one-to-one coaching. Trainers discuss portfolio-building with learners at off-the-job training sessions to help them identify and collect evidence for their NVQs and key skills. Learners understand what is required to complete their units. They take responsibility for their portfolios. Learners accept key skills as an integral part of their programmes, and are not reluctant to take tests.

21. Business administration learners may attend additional McArthur Dean training courses free of charge. In 2001, 19 learners followed courses in legal studies, three gained a qualification and 11 are still in learning. In 2002, of 19 learners in legal studies, two gained a qualification and 10 are still in learning. Other additional courses available include information and communications technology (ICT), first aid, and telephone skills. In 2001, 14 learners took these courses and 13 of them gained qualifications. In 2002, six learners gained the qualifications and 10 are still in learning. Learners who are capable are encouraged to take key skills awards at a higher level than that required by their modern apprenticeship frameworks. One learner has progressed from level 2 to level 3 in one NVQ and is following a second NVQ at level 3 at the same time. Learners may use the resources in the training centre in the evening and on Saturdays.

22. Few learners complete their modern apprenticeships. Of the 324 modern apprentices who started training programmes between 1999-2000 and 2001-02, only nine per cent have achieved all the targets on their modern apprenticeship framework. Thirty-nine per cent are still in learning, and 28 per cent have gained NVQs.

23. The types of evidence in learners' portfolios, although adequate to meet the NVQ requirements, are limited. There are few workplace observations or witness statements.

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McArthur Dean is trying to increase the proportion of assessments carried out in the workplace.

24. Some learners interviewed felt that the training sessions sometimes repeated what they already knew. Trainers are not always fully aware of learners' existing knowledge, and therefore do not adapt the training to take account of it. Learners are not stimulated or challenged when work is repeated unnecessarily.