

INSPECTION REPORT

RWP Training and Development Reinspection

02 December 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 **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.

SUMMARY

The provider

RWP Training and Development is a private training provider based in Carlisle, Cumbria. The company's core business is modern apprenticeship programmes which are offered in engineering and business administration, for foundation modern apprentices and advanced modern apprentices. The company also offers a national vocational qualification (NVQ) training programme. The company has a contract with the Cumbria Learning and Skills Council, which funds this provision. Off-the-job training in engineering is subcontracted to local colleges, while business administration is taught in-house. Since the original inspection, the company has moved into new premises and has improved facilities and resources for off-the-job training. At reinspection, there are 51 advanced modern apprentices, 36 foundation modern apprentices and eight learners on NVQ training. The company is managed by its two partners, who employ 15 staff.

Overall judgement

The original inspection found that business administration was good and leadership and management were satisfactory. However, training in engineering was unsatisfactory, as were quality assurance and equality of opportunity. At the end of the reinspection process, all aspects of the training provision were found to be good.

Grades awarded

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

	Original	Reinspection
Engineering, technology & manufacturing	4	2
Contributory grades:		
Work-based learning for young people	4	2

	Original	Reinspection
Business administration, management & professional	2	2
Contributory grades:		
Work-based learning for young people	2	2

RWP TRAINING AND DEVELOPMENT REINSPECTION

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

KEY STRENGTHS

- strong strategic management
- good retention rates
- very effective initial assessment
- good promotion of equality of opportunity
- good individual support for learners
- effective quality assurance process

THE REINSPECTION

1. Three inspectors spent a total of 13 days reinspecting RWP Training and Development (RWP). Reinspection was carried out in three stages. The first visit was in September 2002, when the company's action plan was reviewed. A second visit in December 2002 inspected business administration and engineering provision, and the final visit in January 2003 completed the reinspection of both areas of learning and leadership and management. In total, inspectors interviewed 37 learners, visited 17 workplaces, conducted 22 interviews with RWP's staff, examined 27 assessment portfolios, and observed and graded two off-the-job learning sessions. They also examined a range of documents including new policies and procedures, and a self-assessment report which was produced in January 2003.

Grades awarded to learning sessions at the original inspection

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

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

Grade 2

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

STRENGTHS

- strong strategic management
- open and responsive management style
- well-developed management information systems
- good promotion of equality of opportunity
- effective quality assurance process

WEAKNESSES

- no effective co-ordination with one subcontractor

OTHER IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED

- further measures to resolve the gender imbalance in engineering programmes

2. RWP is managed by two partners, who provide strong strategic management to the business. The company business plan is detailed and comprehensive, with clear targets which are cross-referenced to national training targets and the local targets set by the Cumbria Learning and Skills Council (LSC). Progress against the targets is regularly monitored. Careful analysis of the costs of training is carried out in order to ensure viability of each programme. Managers have a clear focus on improving retention and achievement rates. For example, improvements have been made to the review process, and individual support has been introduced for learners who need help with key skills or other aspects of their training programme. The company has taken a progressive approach to new developments in work-based learning, for example, through involvement in initiatives to develop vocational provision for 14 to 16 year olds in collaboration with local schools.

3. Communication within the company is good. Staff meet regularly and have a good understanding of the strategic aims of the company, and of the importance of factors such as retention and achievement rates. The company management provides a supportive environment for staff, and gives them good opportunities for personal and professional development. This was identified in the original inspection report. The appraisal system is well established and is effectively used to agree targets with individuals, and to identify their support and development needs. Regular updating sessions are held on subjects such as initial assessment, the review process, and on-the-job training. All members of staff have carried out staff development in the past year, and some have attained higher-level qualifications. Links with employers have also been strengthened through regular information updates, an improved employers' pack giving

details of the NVQ process, and closer monitoring of learners' performance in the workplace.

4. The company has a sound and effective management information system. Learner records are regularly updated and reports are produced and circulated widely throughout the company. Many are in graphical or tabular format, so staff can easily monitor the progress made against the company's targets. The progress of individual learners is monitored using the system to ensure that reviews are held at the correct times and that targets are monitored. Since the original inspection, the company has developed its intranet. This now allows excellent access for all staff to the company procedures and forms, as well as providing access to minutes of all meetings.

5. There is poor communication with, and ineffective training programmes by, one subcontractor. In this case the co-ordination of on- and off-the-job training is not adequately dealt with. The ratio of tutors to learners is poor at this subcontractor. Learners often have unacceptable delays while they are waiting to use equipment and other resources. RWP has identified these weaknesses and has made strenuous efforts to make improvements in the subcontractor's performance. However, RWP has not been successful as yet. Some learners have been transferred to a different subcontractor that can offer more appropriate programmes of off-the-job training and background knowledge. The new partnership is in the early stages of implementation. Some learners have lost a significant amount of study time due to the previous lack of effective planning.

Equality of opportunity

Contributory grade 2

6. At the time of the original inspection, there was little monitoring or promotion of equality of opportunity. RWP has taken effective action to deal with this, and its management of equality of opportunity is now good. A new policy has been developed which is comprehensive and clearly written to make it easy to understand. A separate policy has been produced covering bullying and harassment. The company has produced an implementation plan for each aspect of its policy. It monitors all applicants and new starters to ensure that there are no barriers to participation for particular groups. In addition to ethnicity and gender monitoring, RWP conducts a postcode analysis to determine whether the rural nature of Cumbria is creating barriers to participation. A manager has been given specific responsibility for equality, and reports regularly to the partners. All staff have attended equality training, and an access audit has been carried out using outside consultants to identify improvements which can be made to help learners and staff who have restricted mobility. Learners are given a thorough induction in equality and this is reinforced through the review process. Most demonstrated a good understanding and are aware of RWP's complaints procedure. Good use is made of visual materials such as posters on classroom and corridor walls to remind learners and staff of equality. Employers are also given a thorough introduction the RWP policy when a learner starts work. Their contract with RWP sets out clearly the responsibilities of both parties in promoting equality of opportunity. RWP has helped some companies to develop their own policies in this area. Despite these improvements, the company has not succeeded in attracting any female learners to its engineering programmes.

Quality assurance**Contributory grade 2**

7. At the time of the original inspection, RWP's quality assurance system was poor. Since then the company has carried out a careful analysis of the requirements of an effective quality assurance process and has introduced and implemented new systems and procedures. The new system identifies 11 stages for learners during their time with the company, and sets out procedures and monitoring systems for each stage. These include pre-induction, induction, and on- and off-the-job training. Each stage is monitored and reported. A quality assurance improvement group, which includes the partners, meets every eight weeks to consider reports and identify further potential improvements. Although the system needs further time to become fully established, it is effective in identifying problems and has led to improvements in the management and delivery of training and assessment. For example, improvements have been made to on-the-job training plans, and to the training of mentors as a result of feedback from employers. The company has developed its self-assessment and action-planning processes within the quality assurance framework. All staff have been involved in the development of the self-assessment report. The action plan is regularly monitored and updated. All plans have dates for implementation and identify individual responsibility for action. At the time of the original inspection, internal verification was satisfactory but there were some instances of non-compliance with procedures. Procedures have now been strengthened and regular assessor and verifier meetings are held to ensure consistency of approach. The managing director has taken on the role of lead internal verifier.

Good Practice

RWP managers aim to keep all staff informed about the viability of programmes. They circulate a graph for each programme showing its income and outgoings week by week. This demonstrates that programmes operate at a loss unless most learners achieve their target qualification. Other bar charts are regularly circulated and are displayed on company notice boards to indicate the progress being made on each programme. Staff are clearly focused on the objectives of each training programme.

AREAS OF LEARNING

Engineering, technology & manufacturing

Grade 2

Programmes inspected	Number of learners	Contributory grade
Work-based learning for young people	42	2

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

STRENGTHS

- good retention rates
- particularly thorough introduction to training
- good portfolios of evidence
- very supportive employers
- good individual support for learners

WEAKNESSES

- insufficient planning of on-the-job training
- slow progress by some learners

OTHER IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED

- further development of internal verification sampling to include all learners
- clearer recording of witness testimony by mentors
- better co-ordination of target-setting documents
- better use of workplace evidence for key skills

8. Retention rates for modern apprentices have been consistently good from 2001 to 2003. During this period, only two modern apprentices have left before the end of the programme. As the company has only been offering training since 1999, there are no completions of the frameworks as yet. Achievement rates for learners who transferred to RWP programmes are good. In 1999-2000, 83 per cent completed the full advanced modern apprenticeship framework.

9. Initial assessment is thorough and consistently applied by RWP. All learners have basic skills and key skills assessments which are supported by an in-depth interview to

identify the level of previous learning. A trade-specific assessment is also carried out. Information is accurately recorded onto individual learning plans. Learners who have basic skills needs are recommended for additional learning sessions. Induction takes place between three days and one week at the centre and on employer's premises. Learners are made aware of their role and responsibilities in training and are able to recall the content of induction when transferred to the workplace. Good attention is paid to equality of opportunity at this stage. There are thorough discussions with employers at the start of programmes to clarify that the NVQ is appropriate to the learner.

10. RWP's staff have resolved the previous weaknesses in assessment practice. Observations are now thoroughly recorded and a wide range of evidence is presented in portfolios. Portfolios of evidence are well structured and well presented. Learners have a good understanding of the requirements of the qualification and are regularly collecting evidence related to practical work. Good use is made of diverse evidence such as written reports, customer-based activities, photographs of work tasks and examples of relevant projects to support competency. Self-assessment is encouraged and measured against instructor assessment during reviews. Internal verification is well planned and involves all parties. It includes sampling of assessor activity and examination of learners' evidence, and support for assessors. At present some of the learners' work is not sampled for internal verification and RWP is currently improving verification to ensure that all learners are identified in plans and visited. In some cases witness testimonies used as evidence are insufficiently authenticated. Statements by mentors are used as evidence without an adequate list and signatures of approved competent persons.

11. Learners are given good support by their employers. Following improvements in the information supplied to employers by RWP, most now have an acceptable understanding of their learners' NVQ and the assessment process. Most allow time during the working week for learners to collect evidence and build portfolios. Learners are well supported in the workplace by effective mentors, who are provided with a useful manual containing information about the programme. RWP and employers encourage learners to achieve additional qualifications, such as additional NVQ units, health and safety certificates, and technical qualifications. Some progress to higher national certificate and diploma awards. Most of the costs are subsidised by RWP. Over 80 per cent of learners continue to develop their skills and remain in jobs with their employers on completion of their apprenticeship.

12. There is good support for learners who have basic skills needs. Additional learning needs for basic skills are identified during initial assessment, and effective support is given. For example, additional training is organised to cover literacy and numeracy. Assessors have arranged for less written work to be completed in some cases, with an additional emphasis on practical assessment. More computer work with spellchecking and alternative methods of assessment are encouraged for learners who have dyslexia. RWP loans computers to learners who do not have access to them at home.

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13. Learners are also given good support outside working hours. Assessors support learners with additional help in portfolio-building, background knowledge sessions or by providing pastoral support. Learners are encouraged to contact assessors at any time, by e-mail or telephone. Progress reviews are frequent and are consistently applied by RWP's staff. In most cases supervisors or mentors are actively involved in the discussion to support learners' achievement in the workplace. Key skills are planned into the early stages of training and learners are encouraged to complete the key skills in their first year. Key skills are taught at the training centre as part of the day-release programme. There is, however, little use of work-based evidence. Opportunities are not taken to include calculations and workshop documents into the appropriate units of key skills.

14. Planning of on-the-job training is inconsistent and in most cases it is limited to a movement schedule. This shows that learners will move from one section of the company to another at set times or for set periods. There is little planning of the learning which should take place, or the skills which learners should achieve in each section. NVQ requirements are not effectively linked to tasks in the workplace. There are few medium- or long-term plans which identify the objectives to be achieved, methods and evaluation processes and who is responsible. However, explanation sheets which link practical tasks to the NVQ are under development and are now undergoing trials with some employers. There has been a good response from employers to this initiative.

15. There is slow progress by some learners towards the NVQ at level 2. Few learners achieve the qualification within the timescale shown in their individual learning plans. Learners are often well advanced into gathering evidence for the level 3 programme before they have completed all units of the level 2. At level 3, RWP has successfully dealt with the slow progress of some learners, which was identified during the original inspection. Most learners now complete the advanced modern apprenticeship framework within three and a half years.

Good Practice

RWP has acted swiftly to develop a modern apprenticeship programme to meet the needs of a local employer. Working with the employer and a college, a plan has been devised which meets the needs of all parties and the requirements of the awarding body. The employer will assist the college by providing up-to-date machinery for use during off-the-job training. Workplace mentors have been trained to develop their understanding of links between in-company training and the off-the-job elements of the programme. This three-way partnership is adding value to the contribution of each of the partners.

One learner who has additional needs in numeracy and literacy has been motivated to improve his basic skills because RWP is using the driving test paperwork for the training in basic skills.

Business administration, management & professional**Grade 2**

Programmes inspected	Number of learners	Contributory grade
Work-based learning for young people	53	2

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

STRENGTHS

- good retention rates
- good achievement rates for foundation modern apprentices
- very effective initial assessment
- good support for learners

WEAKNESSES

- little awareness of NVQ requirements by some employers

16. Retention rates on all programmes have improved and are now good. They have increased from 38 per cent in 1999-2000 to 79 per cent in 2001-02. The retention rates for advanced modern apprentices have increased from 73 per cent in 1999-2000 to 79 per cent in 2001-02. The retention rates for the NVQ programme have increased from 67 per cent in 2000-01 to 100 per cent in 2001-02. The achievement rates are improving for foundation modern apprentices. In 2000-01, 56 per cent of learners completed all aspects of their framework, compared with 39 per cent in 1999-2000. Twenty-five per cent of foundation modern apprentices progressed to the advanced modern apprenticeship in 2000-01 and 23 per cent progressed in 2001-02. One learner who progressed from one programme to the other is now a mentor to two foundation modern apprentices in the workplace. Two NVQ learners have progressed to a level 4 NVQ. A high proportion of learners go in to or remain in employment at the end of their training programme. Portfolios of evidence are good. They are well presented with a range of evidence, mostly collected in the workplace. Key skills are an integral part of the work-based evidence. For example, one learner planned and costed the refurbishment of an office in an assignment which demonstrated vocational and key skill competence.

17. RWP gives good pastoral and learning support through regular contact with learners in the workplace. Assessors visit learners every two to three weeks, and carry out progress reviews every 10 weeks. Since the original inspection, RWP has introduced greater scope for confidential discussion in the review process. Learners are given

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telephone cards and contact numbers for the three assessors so they can ask for help at any time. Workplace mentors are involved in the planning of training and assessment with learners and assessors. Most mentors show good understanding of the modern apprenticeships and the NVQ process. Good use is made of the individual learning plan, which is used to record all on- and off-the-job training. Off-the-job training includes half-day or full-day workshops on topics such as NVQ units, health and safety, and managing, planning and organising work. Extra mathematics support is offered, either in the workplace or at RWP's training centre, to help with key skills achievement. Learners are given textbooks and have access to a variety of videos and workbooks at RWP's resource centre. Learners are well supported at the start of their training programme. Before registering, applicants attend a presentation by the recruitment officer which introduces them to work-based learning and explains the NVQ process. This is followed by a one-day induction which covers explanations of the framework, portfolio-building, health and safety and equal opportunities.

18. There is a very effective initial assessment. It is in four separate parts, comprising an interview, a basic skills test, key skills assessment testing on the computer, and an occupational skills assessment, to determine where the learners' interests are and to guide learners on to appropriate training courses. Prior learning and achievement are also considered and the results are shared with the learners and the employer. A copy of the test results are given to the employer and a copy is kept in the learners' personal file. RWP's staff have good access to this information so they can plan to meet the learners' individual needs.

19. Although most workplace mentors have a good understanding of learners' programmes, this is not always the case. Inspectors identified that some employers are not sufficiently aware of the NVQ process, or of the requirements which learners have to meet. RWP has introduced a comprehensive employer information pack to deal with this, but some of the employers have not received a copy.

Good Practice

RWP funds additional qualifications when they feel it will help the employability of learners.