

# REINSPECTION REPORT

## **Bright Horizons Family Solutions Ltd (formerly Kinderquest Ltd) Reinspection**

12 September 2003



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

Bright Horizons Family Solutions Ltd (formerly Kinderquest Ltd) runs 76 nurseries for a range of public and private sector organisations. It provides work-based learning programmes for young people, in early years care and education, and in customer service. Learners are following modern apprenticeships. Sixty-two learners are funded by the local Learning and Skills Council. All learners are employed by the company, in nurseries around the country. In February 2003, the head office moved into new accommodation in Rushden. In June 2003, the administration centre moved from the head office to one of the nursery buildings in Bootle. Assessment is carried out in the nurseries by roving assessors and some work-based assessors, all of whom are employed by the company. Off-the-job training takes place at a number of locations around the country.

### Overall judgement

At the previous inspection, training for learners in early years care and education was unsatisfactory as was leadership and management, and quality assurance. At the end of the reinspection process, all aspects of the provision were found to be satisfactory or better.

### Grades awarded

	Inspection	Reinspection
<b>Leadership and management</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>2</b>
Contributory grades:		
Equality of opportunity	3	3
Quality assurance	4	2

	Inspection	Reinspection
<b>Retailing, customer service &amp; transportation</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>3</b>
Contributory grades:		
Work-based learning for young people	3	3

	Inspection	Reinspection
<b>Health, social care &amp; public services</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>2</b>
Contributory grades:		
Work-based learning for young people	4	2

## BRIGHT HORIZONS FAMILY SOLUTIONS LTD (FORMERLY KINDERQUEST LTD) REINSPECTION

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

### KEY STRENGTHS

- good management of improvements to provision
- good communications
- thorough and effective induction
- good off-the-job training in early years care and education
- good achievement rates in customer service
- good standard of learners' work in early years care and education

### KEY WEAKNESSES

- poor management of attendance at formal training
- ineffective progress reviews in early years care and education
- some limited resources in customer service

## THE REINSPECTION

1. Reinspection at Bright Horizons Family Solutions (BHFS) was carried out in three stages. Three inspectors spent a total of 18 days over three visits. The first stage was a one-day visit in March 2003 by the lead inspector. The second stage was a two-day visit by the lead inspector and an associate inspector, in June 2003. The final visit was over five days and involved the lead inspector and two associate inspectors, in September 2003. Inspectors interviewed 40 learners and carried out 27 interviews with BHFS's staff. They made 16 visits to work placements and interviewed 16 workplace supervisors. Inspectors examined a range of documents including, learner portfolios and documents, the self-assessment report and several detailed updated action plans.

Grades awarded to learning sessions at the original inspection

	Grade 1	Grade 2	Grade 3	Grade 4	Grade 5	Grade 6	Grade 7	Total
Retailing, customer service & transportation	0	1	0	2	0	0	0	3
Health, social care & public services	0	0	1	1	1	0	0	3
<b>Total</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>6</b>

## LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

Grade 2

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

### STRENGTHS

- good management of improvements to provision
- good communications
- effective staff training and development
- thorough and effective reinforcement of learners' awareness of equality of opportunity
- good use of feedback to improve provision

### WEAKNESSES

- poor management of attendance at formal training sessions
- late introduction of some improved procedures
- insufficient detailed action-planning following analysis of data on equality of opportunity

2. There is good management of improvements to the provision. Improvements have taken place in both areas of learning, with the most significant ones in early years care and education. This has been part of a structured improvement plan. The action plan was clearly written with good objectives which identified responsibilities and completion dates. There is good monitoring of the progress with the action plan and effective measurement of the impact of the action on learners and the quality of the provision. Regular and clear reports of progress are given to senior management. Employers and learners all report improvements to the provision over the past two years. This momentum of change has been mostly maintained throughout the uncertainty caused during the mergers and restructuring.

3. There are good communications, with regular and frequent meetings for different aspects of the provision. There are well-recorded meetings of internal verifiers, assessors and of the whole training department. Actions are clearly stated with details and responsibilities. There are awaydays to discuss specific details, particularly improvements to provision. Since the previous inspection, communications have been improved by the introduction of an intranet. Most learners have access to this to allow them to use e-mail to contact assessors. Responses are swift and effective. Most learners also have access to the internet. Assessors are in frequent and effective contact with learners, who all report good communications. There is good contact with outside agencies, such as the early years partnership, to share good practice and improve the learners' experience. Recently, an effective method of regularly reporting learners' progress to the management has been introduced.



4. There is a business plan with clear objectives. The plan has been regularly updated to follow the changes to the corporate structure and improvements to the provision. Since the previous inspection, the plan has been modified to include detailed targets relating to learner performance. These targets are entered on to departmental plans and also passed on to individual staff.

5. There is good staff training and development. Staff have a clear induction which prepares them well for their roles. There is a clear, detailed and well-recorded analysis of staff training and development needs. Feedback on observed staff performance is detailed, clear and informative. All staff have in-depth individual meetings with their manager, on a monthly basis. The meetings are well recorded and give constructive feedback. They cover staff development needs and learner issues. Staff are well qualified for the roles they perform and are encouraged to take a range of training courses which will benefit learners.

6. The management of learner data is satisfactory. Since the previous inspection, the organisation has developed a management information system. Existing learner data have now been entered onto this system and used to provide reports for management. There are plans to further develop the use of this system. The arrangements for the provision of literacy and numeracy support are satisfactory. Initial assessment is thorough and the results are used to provide appropriate support.

7. There is poor management of attendance at formal training sessions. All learners have enough knowledge to achieve their qualification. The information is provided through a range of methods, including formal training sessions. However, the formal training is not always well attended and some courses are cancelled because of insufficient numbers of learners. Some learners miss the chance of this formal training as they have difficulty obtaining release from work during the week. Some learners are unable to claim time off from work to make up for training attended on Saturday. There is insufficient clarity in the guidance which is given to nursery managers. For example, some documents state that the time off is discretionary, although the company policy is that it is an entitlement. Some learners find difficulty travelling to the head office, where much of the training takes place. The provider is aware of this issue and several actions have been taken. Training is now being offered on Saturdays and weekdays, for early years care and education learners. Training is also being offered in different locations and there are plans to clarify the guidance given to nursery managers.

8. Some of the improved procedures have been introduced late. At the previous inspection the equality of opportunity policies and procedures were satisfactory and have since improved. The quality assurance procedures have improved and the essential ones that are now in place are satisfactory. As part of the continual improvement process there have been additional improvements and some of the procedures are now good. These procedures have existed for some time, but the changes to the corporate structure have delayed their introduction.

## Equality of opportunity

## Contributory grade 3

9. BHFS has a satisfactory policy statement on equality of opportunity, which covers all aspects of equality and diversity. There are clear procedures for complaints, harassment and grievances. Learners are aware of the processes to follow. There is a new draft policy for equality of opportunity, which is very good, clear and understandable. However, it is not yet in place. There is an action plan for equality of opportunity which covers many aspects of equality of opportunity and is effectively managed. Recognising and appreciating diversity is an integral part of the culture of the organisation. There are numerous good references to these issues in the form of posters, wall displays and other company material. There is good use of examples to discourage stereotyping, such as reference to the male nursery managers in the company. There is satisfactory management of the complaints process and effective action is taken to resolve learners' issues.

10. Learners working as nursery workers and those on the modern apprenticeship and national vocational qualification (NVO) programmes receive effective training in equality of opportunity. Equality of opportunity training is not treated as a separate topic; it is fully integrated with all aspects of training as a recurrent theme. There is good use of scenarios and workplace simulation to challenge learners to consider equality and diversity issues. This takes place at induction and other formal training and is also part of the learners' training packs. Recruitment on to the programme is a key part of employment for all new staff and they also have the option to progress on to other training, such as customer service qualifications. Some learners have not had access to formal training and learning resources. Some have no opportunity to work on their portfolios at any time in the working day. There are a few learners who are not given time off for attending training on a Saturday. There are also some who do not have access to books and periodicals.

11. There is good reinforcement of learners' awareness of equality of opportunity. It is a recurrent theme during their normal work and is considered to be a key part of their knowledge. Equality and diversity are covered during assessor visits. Assessors will ask questions from a defined list, which are detailed and demand thoughtful answers from the learners. It is now standard practice for learners to write the answers on the visit feedback forms. The assessor then uses the answers as a basis for a discussion on equality and diversity. Learners' awareness of equality of opportunity is at least satisfactory throughout, and in many cases it is good. Staff receive adequate training in equality of opportunity.

12. There is insufficient detailed action-planning following the analysis of data on equal opportunities. Since the previous inspection, there has been work to improve the use of data. There has been detailed collection of data and some informal analysis and actions to deal with issues such as the under-representation of men. Data have recently been entered onto a new computer system which has been used to carry out a detailed analysis. However, the action plan to deal with the issues has not yet been produced. Equality of opportunity is discussed at meetings, but has not been a formal agenda item at

each meeting. There are plans to make equality of opportunity a standard agenda item at meetings.

### **Quality assurance**

### **Contributory grade 2**

13. Since the previous inspection, there has been a lot of work carried out on the quality assurance of training. There are now procedures to cover all aspects of training. Some of these procedures are good. There is a draft quality assurance manual which is very good, but has not yet been introduced into the programme. There have been recent effective audits of learner documents and these have resulted in improvements, such as the way that review documents are completed. However, some audit activities are not recorded in detail. There has been effective involvement of all training staff, supervisors and employers, in revisions to procedures and documents.

14. There is a regular and effective programme of observation of staff. Observation feedback is detailed, clear and effectively recorded. Recently, a deputy quality assurance manager has been recruited who has specific and detailed experience of work-based learning. There is an effective system for monitoring and progressing issues raised. Informal audits have identified some of the weaknesses identified by inspectors. As well as actions to directly deal with the weaknesses, the provider has integrated the quality assurance of training within the overall quality assurance arrangements for the organisation. These will include formal audits of the provision.

15. There is good use of feedback to improve provision. Feedback is collected from learners at six weeks, at the mid-point and at the end of the programme. The questionnaires are well written with good open questions to deal with all aspects of provision. Employer feedback is gathered annually. These questionnaires are similarly well structured and include a specific question on whether the provision has improved. The feedback is thoroughly analysed and action is taken to respond to the feedback. For example, actions have been taken to improve access to formal training. Feedback from learners and supervisors has also formed a key part of monitoring specific improvements to the provision.

16. Since the previous inspection, there have been significant improvements in internal verification. There are clear procedures and good planning and regular and effective standardisation meetings. Internal verification is satisfactory in customer service and a strength in early years care and education. The self-assessment and action-planning process is now an integral part of the provision. Staff are involved in the process which has resulted in an accurate assessment of provision. Most of the weaknesses have been identified by the provider and overall, since the previous inspection, there has been significant improvement in the quality of the provision.

## AREAS OF LEARNING

### Retailing, customer service & transportation

Grade 3

Programmes inspected	Number of learners	Contributory grade
Work-based learning for young people	19	3

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

#### STRENGTHS

- good achievement rates
- thorough initial assessment
- effective induction process

#### WEAKNESSES

- slow progress towards completion of framework by some learners
- some limited resources

17. The achievement rates are good. Over 80 per cent of the learners who enrolled on the programme completed the framework. Most learners also achieve certification in basic food hygiene, first aid and health and safety. Most of the early leavers from the programme are those who left the company. Learners are recruited on to the apprenticeship programme when they start with the company, especially those who already have early years care and education qualifications. All learners are recruited on to the programme by targeting staff who are employed in the nurseries. The standard of learners' work is satisfactory.

18. Since the previous inspection, a thorough initial assessment process has been introduced to closely match learners to the programme and to identify training and additional support needs. A variety of diagnostic tests is being used for literacy and numeracy assessment and to determine the level of key skills that the learners may be able to achieve. A skill scan is used to cross-reference learners' skills to the NVQ and their job role. The learners who need additional support with key skills are given individual help by assessors. Outcomes of the initial assessment are recorded on learners' files and shared with the learners and their line managers. A thorough workplace training report is produced which records the training attended by learners. It also records the collection of evidence together with their progress towards the framework. Internal verifiers record all activities on the sampling plan and provide written feedback to the assessors on their decisions.

19. Since the previous inspection, an effective induction programme has been introduced. All learners attend a one-day induction programme at the head office. Those who are unable to attend or choose not to attend these sessions cover the content on an individual basis with their assessor in the workplace. Topics include the requirements of the framework, NVQ content and process, guidance on evidence gathering by unit, guidance on portfolio-building, the assessment process, assessors' names and contact details, equal opportunities, and complaints and grievance procedures. Learners sign a statement to confirm that they have understood the induction and take part in a quiz to demonstrate and reinforce their learning. Learners and managers are given a handbook, which is a reference document to reinforce all the topics covered during induction. This has improved learners' and managers' understanding of the requirements of the framework and NVQs.

20. Off-the-job training is provided for the NVQ in customer service, key skills, evidence gathering and portfolio-building. This is provided at formal training sessions or by assessors during workplace visits. A copy of the training plan for the next six months is circulated to all learners. They can nominate themselves for attendance, once they have discussed and agreed their training needs with their line manager and assessor. Learners are not always given sufficient support to arrange attendance at training sessions. Most of the training takes place at the head office in Rushden.

21. The number of assessors has increased since the previous inspection and more time is now available to carry out assessments. Assessors are set targets relating specifically to NVQ progress. All learners are allocated a named assessor and a workplace mentor, and are provided with contact details for use in between visits. Assessment is planned with the learners and some observations are carried out in the workplace. Assessors are well supported and meet regularly to discuss progress, carry out standardisation activities, and deal with common problems. The evidence in the portfolios is relevant and includes evidence of everyday tasks in the workplace.

22. There is slow progress towards completion of the framework for some learners. All learners to date have completed the programme in a minimum of 18 months and many take two years. However, there are some learners who are capable of completing the framework early because of their aptitude and prior achievement. Some learners feel that the timescale for the programme is too long and that they would prefer to complete in a shorter timescale.

23. There are limited resources in some areas. There are insufficient learning materials such as books, videos and other distance learning materials. Although learners have access to a computer and the internet in the workplace, some are expected to use the facilities in their own time, such as during their lunch break. The training plan from March to September 2003 shows that all the planned training is held on Saturdays, mostly at the head office. The head office is not easily accessible for some learners. The company has a policy to give learners time off from work for attending off-the-job training in their own time, and two hours a week study time to work towards their NVQ. However, some learners do not receive this time off, nor do they have time to

#### BRIGHT HORIZONS FAMILY SOLUTIONS LTD (FORMERLY KINDERQUEST LTD) REINSPECTION

complete the portfolio work in work time, because of local staffing issues and an inconsistent application of the policy. There are instances where several learners have to share one book. The provider has identified this weakness and is developing a resource library. The issues of time to attend training and to develop NVQ portfolios are being dealt with, but it is too early to judge the effectiveness of these actions.

**Health, social care & public services****Grade 2**

Programmes inspected	Number of learners	Contributory grade
Work-based learning for young people	43	2

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

**STRENGTHS**

- effective induction process
- good off-the-job training
- good NVQ portfolios
- good work placements
- effective internal verification
- good support for learners

**WEAKNESSES**

- insufficient updating of individual learning plans
- ineffective progress reviews
- slow development of key skills

24. Achievement and retention rates are satisfactory for foundation and advanced modern apprentices. The number of foundation modern apprentices is too small to give meaningful percentages. The retention and achievement rates for advanced modern apprentices were 67 per cent in 1999-2000 and around 55 per cent for the next two years. For 2002-03, there are currently 80 per cent of learners still on the programme. All learners are encouraged to recognise and achieve their full potential. As learners gain skills many managers ensure that they are given the opportunity to take on additional responsibility in the workplace.

25. The induction process is well structured, memorable and effective. Learners are given a three-day induction into the workplace and their programme. All learners complete an application form, are interviewed and take an initial assessment. The induction enables learners to understand the requirements of their NVQ and their rights and responsibilities. It provides a good foundation for learners' programmes. Learners are given a detailed information pack to reinforce the topics covered. All learners clearly remember their induction and are able to recall the information given to them. They are aware of equal opportunities and the appeals and complaints procedures. Learners value their induction as it gives them more confidence at the start of their programme and ensures they have a good understanding of all aspects of their training.

26. There is good off-the-job training. Learners are taught the background knowledge and practical skills well. Employers have commented that they have noticed an improvement in learners' practice. Training is provided within a group setting or on an individual basis. There are professionally qualified and occupationally competent staff. Staff have detailed sessions plans with clear aims and objectives that are linked to the NVQ. All staff use a wide range of good learning materials and have developed good additional background knowledge packs for all of the NVQ units. Learners have reported that the quality of training is good and that they find the sessions enjoyable and helpful. There are adequate resources in many of the workplaces. If learners are unable to attend the training sessions the background knowledge packs are sent to them. Learners are also given the opportunity to progress on to the customer service NVQ to complement their occupational qualification.

27. The NVQ portfolios are good. They are well presented and the quality and content exceed the requirements of the awarding body. They contain a good range of evidence especially on child development, which is an important aspect of all early years care and education work. Assessments are well planned and detailed, with particularly good involvement from learners. Learners complete an action plan before each assessment, which outlines the resources needed to complete the assessment, including time and input from workplace staff. Action plans also identify the objectives of the assessment and contain an evaluation by the learner which is agreed and signed by the learner and their workplace supervisor. A variety of assessment methods is used to assess learners' competence. All relevant documents are completed and signed. Observations of assessments are recorded in detail and are clearly linked to the NVQ standards. Learners receive prompt and constructive feedback on assessment outcomes. They also have good support with portfolio-building and collecting of evidence.

28. There are good work placements. Workplace supervisors have a good understanding of the NVQ requirements and are supportive of learners. Learners are able to work with all age groups in the nursery to ensure full coverage of the NVQ. They are also given the opportunity to extend their experience and to implement what they have learnt. Learners are supervised well and are given on-the-job advice and guidance, which develops their practical skills. They are also given additional training and workshops to support their background knowledge and job role.

29. Internal verification is thorough and effective. There are five experienced staff who are competent and confident with their roles and responsibilities. There is a clear monitoring chart for the sampling of assessment activity. Internal verification is carried out in three key stages. The first stage is at eight to 12 weeks, when a unit is sampled to quality assure practice. Mid-stage internal verification takes place at 20-25 weeks, when a unit is sampled to ensure that the learner is on target and to identify if any additional support is required. Final stage internal verification samples discreet areas of assessor practice such as observations and background knowledge. There are regular recorded observations of assessor practice and detailed feedback is given to assessors on the validity of their assessments. The internal verifier also gathers feedback from learners to



establish their satisfaction with the assessment process. The internal verifier completes reports of the sampling carried out. There are monthly assessor meetings which are activity-based and are clearly used to standardise practice. There is effective communication within the team to enable them to share best practice and resolve areas of concern quickly.

30. There is good support for learners throughout their programme. All learners are allocated to an assessor who visits each learner for a significant amount of time every month. Assessors support learners with personal and social issues as well as towards their qualification. Additional learning needs identified at induction are assessed on an individual basis and individual support is provided by each learner's assessor. Assessors are easily accessible, flexible and responsive to learners' needs. The close relationship between assessors and learners help to build learners' self-esteem and confidence. Learners value the support they receive and recognise that it helps them to stay on programme and achieve. BHFS also supports learners to attend off-the-job training and provides residential accommodation. All expenses are paid and learners are able to use the nursery facilities at 50 per cent discount. In addition, there is a budget to provide temporary staff to cover the nursery while staff attend training. There are some good resources to support learning, and information packs are sent to learners who are unable to attend training.

31. Individual learning plans are insufficiently updated. Assessors do not routinely record information on the learners' progress or details of what they have achieved or changes in circumstances. Some learning plans do not include learner's additional learning needs or contain an action plan. They are not regularly used as a basis for reviews, nor are they used to record dates of reviews. Learners' progress towards their qualification, or details of what they have achieved are not always updated and accurate. Learning plans are not tailored to individual needs and some learners do not recognise the document. Some target dates and achievement dates are the same.

32. Progress reviews are ineffective and do not recognise the distance travelled by the learner. There are few targets to continue to challenge the learners' abilities and improve their skills. Some learners are not given enough guidance to ensure that they can improve their practice. Targets do not identify in detail what action the learner should take before the next progress review and are not used effectively to guide the planning of learners' training. There is little indication of whether additional support, such as literacy or numeracy training, is effective. There is insufficient detail recorded on the review form and some comments are vague and descriptive rather than evaluative. Reviews are often very informal and do not involve managers. In some cases assessors give informal feedback to managers after the review. In some reviews equal opportunities and health and safety are not checked in any detail. Individual learning plans are not used as the basis for reviews. The provider has identified these weaknesses and there are plans to improve the completion of individual learning plans and review paperwork, and also to improve the effectiveness of reviews. It is too early to judge the effectiveness of these plans.

33. There is slow development of key skills. Key skills training is not an integral part of most NVQ training sessions. Key skills have been introduced late in the learners' training and many of the learners have nearly finished their NVQ with no training or assessment of key skills. Key skills are not always referred to during off-the-job training. Some assessors do not identify the links between the NVQ requirements and key skills and do not set assignments which naturally generate evidence. There is a separate key skills file maintained by the learners, but it is not cross-referenced to the NVQ. Some staff have insufficient confidence to implement and support the development of key skills. Some learners are entered for tests without adequate preparation. BHFS has identified this weakness and has started to make key skills an integral part of the NVQ. It is too early to judge how effective this will be.