

INSPECTION REPORT

Davidson Training UK Limited Reinspection

15 October 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

Davidson Training UK Limited is a private limited company and is based in Gravesend. It was founded in 1997 and offers work-based learning for 184 young people in hairdressing, retailing and customer service and business administration. The provider no longer offers training in hospitality, sport, leisure, and travel which was included in the original inspection. There are 38 learners in hairdressing, 125 in retailing and customer service and 21 in business administration. At the original inspection, there were too few learners in business administration to be inspected. Learners follow advanced and foundation modern apprenticeships which include national vocational qualifications (NVQs) at level 2 and 3 and key skills. Training is funded through a contract with London Central Learning and Skills Council.

The company has 13 staff including two directors. One director has overall responsibility for strategic planning and operational management. All learners are employed in 40 businesses in London and the Southeast. Training and assessment take place in the workplace.

Overall judgement

At the original inspection of Davidson Training, inspectors found that retailing and customer service and hairdressing were unsatisfactory. Leadership and management and quality assurance were also unsatisfactory. Equality of opportunity was satisfactory. 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	3
Quality assurance	4	3

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

	Original	Reinspection
Retailing, customer service & transportation	4	3
Contributory grades:		
Work-based learning for young people	4	3

	Original	Reinspection
Hairdressing & beauty therapy	4	3
Contributory grades:		
Work-based learning for young people	4	3

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

KEY STRENGTHS

- good strategic and operational management
- good development of learners' skills
- very effective links with employers
- better retention rates

KEY WEAKNESSES

- insufficient use of initial assessment
- incomplete monitoring of quality assurance
- weak long-term target-setting in retailing and customer service
- no awareness of equality of opportunity by some learners

OTHER IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED

- better use and recording of employer training

THE REINSPECTION

1. The reinspection of Davidson Training UK Limited (Davidson Training) was carried out in two stages over a total of 17 days. The first stage took place on 14 and 15 October 2002. The second stage was completed between 25 and 27 February 2003. Davidson Training had prepared a revised self-assessment report in August 2002. Fifteen employers were visited and 12 employers and/or supervisors were interviewed. Thirty-one learners were interviewed and 27 portfolios were examined. Thirty-one individual learning plans were scrutinised. Inspectors observed and graded four learning sessions.

Grades awarded to learning sessions at the original inspection

	Grade 1	Grade 2	Grade 3	Grade 4	Grade 5	Grade 6	Grade 7	Total
Hairdressing & beauty therapy	0	0	0	2	0	0	0	2
Total	0	0	0	2	0	0	0	2

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	0	1	0	0	0	1
Retailing, customer service & transportation	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	1
Hairdressing & beauty therapy	0	0	2	0	0	0	0	2
Total	0	1	2	1	0	0	0	4

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

Grade 3

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

STRENGTHS

- good strategic and operational management
- good communication
- regular and effective updating of equality of opportunity for most learners
- thorough start to the implementation of a total quality framework

WEAKNESSES

- insufficient use of management information in decision-making
- some poor awareness of equality of opportunity by learners
- incomplete monitoring of quality assurance

2. The directors give clear direction for the company and teamwork is well promoted. The aims and mission of the company are well understood and effectively promoted by all staff. Since the original inspection, changes to the management structure have been implemented and all staff now fully understand their roles and the contribution they make to the learners' experience. Since the original inspection, swift response and effective management of under-performance has improved the quality of the learners' experience. Serious difficulties in one of the occupational areas have been overcome. The poor work of a subcontractor has been identified and measures to improve the provision effectively have been implemented. The quality of the learners' training has been significantly improved.

3. Communication is good. Monthly meetings ensure that staff are well informed and updated on awarding body requirements. Regular communication on a less formal basis ensures effective support for the learners' social and learning needs. Learners value the support given by staff and say that it increases their motivation to succeed. Most good practice is shared across the company. A procedure has been successfully implemented where staff can put forward ideas and materials to be considered and used by the whole team. However, there are some instances where their implementation is not consistent across the occupational areas.

4. Performance management, staff appraisal and review are effective in improving the quality of the provision through continuous professional development. Staff are given personal targets based on the number of learners and each assessor meets with the training centre manager every four weeks to discuss progress towards meeting the targets. Through this system new assessors are given good support during their training.

5. Davidson Training is in the process of developing a comprehensive system to collect a wide range of information about learners. However, the information is not analysed centrally to identify patterns and trends, nor is it used to set targets to improve achievement rates. Reports can now be produced to monitor training and identify areas for improvement and a start has been made to share these with all staff. However, it is too early to fully evaluate the effectiveness of the new system.

6. Procedures to identify and provide additional literacy and numeracy teaching are in place. Staff are in the process of gaining additional competence in teaching basic skills through short courses. Most of the learners are receiving appropriate support, but quality assurance systems do not identify where the intended support has not been implemented. Davidson Training has a useful range of resources to support staff in the teaching of literacy and numeracy.

Equality of opportunity

Contributory grade 3

7. Aspects of equality of opportunity are reinforced through key skills assignments, and through individual coaching during assessor visits. For example, one of the tasks is to read up on aspects of equality of opportunity and then write a personal statement on what it is. Topics include racial and gender discrimination.

8. Since the original inspection, the company has implemented a range of strategies to promote equality of opportunity. Resources have been produced to enable employers to gain a full understanding of the wider implications of equality of opportunity. An enhanced induction includes a handbook on equality of opportunity for learners to use as a resource. In one company, a learner gave a training session on equality of opportunity to all the staff team. However, learners' experiences vary and some learners do not have equality of opportunity reinforced on a systematic basis. Some learners do not have a full understanding of the wider aspects of equality of opportunity.

9. The company has a comprehensive equality of opportunity policy, which is regularly reviewed and refers to new legislation. Procedures for implementation of the policy are in place, such as ensuring that all learners have equal access to training opportunities in their employment. Data are analysed for gender and ethnicity. The learner population reflects the proportion of under-represented groups in the locality.

Quality assurance

Contributory grade 3

10. A thorough start has been made in implementing a total quality assurance framework. Quality assurance procedures apply to all training processes. For example, a set of procedures is used to monitor learners' files to ensure records are up to date and accurate, and that learners are making progress. Systems and monitoring procedures are precise and are in sufficient detail for compliance. Useful feedback from learners and employers is carefully analysed and changes are implemented. Questionnaires cover all aspects of the learners' training including areas identified as needing improvement in the original inspection. Procedures are in place for monitoring attendance at training sessions and swift action is taken using the stages for disciplinary action and appeals. There are satisfactory measures for dealing with complaints and appeals.

11. Staff understand and are fully involved in the organisation's quality assurance framework, which includes self-assessment and monitoring of the development plans. Following a thorough and collaborative approach to self-assessment, all staff have individual priorities for action. Self-assessment identified the weaknesses highlighted during inspection, although their significance was not always accurate.

12. Some aspects of the quality assurance framework have not been monitored for effective implementation. As a result, not all learners experience the same quality of training. For example, some of the reviews are not completed to the same standard and learners' action plans vary in quality. The quality assurance framework clearly states that all learners should have feedback from their initial assessment, but this is not happening. The use of the equality of opportunity learning resources varies between employers.

13. The company has made a start towards monitoring the training given by employers. This is at an early stage and does not include the observation of staff carrying out individual coaching or training. The effectiveness of training is not established, neither is there a procedure to effect continuous improvement.

AREAS OF LEARNING

Business administration, management & professional

Grade 2

Programmes inspected	Number of learners	Contributory grade
Work-based learning for young people	21	2

14. Business administration was not part of the provision inspected during the original inspection of Davidson Training. There are 21 learners in business administration, of whom nine are advanced modern apprentices and 12 are foundation modern apprentices. All learners are recruited through employers. Davidson Training has developed a network of employers in London and the Kent area, which includes local small businesses, international companies and a wide variety of service companies. All learners are employed. There is one assessor who also provides training and coaching to learners. The assessor visits learners in the workplace every two weeks and progress reviews take place at least every month.

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

STRENGTHS

- good progress by learners
- good assessment practice
- very effective links between employer training and assessment

WEAKNESSES

- some poor workplace support systems
- some poor awareness of equal opportunities

15. Retention and achievement rates for foundation and advanced modern apprentices are satisfactory. Of the 19 learners who started foundation modern apprenticeships between 2000 and 2003, seven have completed the framework and 12 are still in learning. Of the 19 learners who started advanced modern apprenticeships in the same period, five have completed the framework, and nine are still in learning.

16. Learners make good progress. Learners and assessors agree a demanding but realistic long-term target date at the start of their training. Challenging short-term targets are set at each assessment visit. Learners are encouraged to make good progress by the clear and realistic targets. Learners take pride in having achieved parts of their programme in advance of the planned dates. Employers support and encourage

learners to make progress by helping them to gain skills and knowledge at work. Employers value their learners' achievement of NVQ and key skills units.

17. Assessment practice is good. Learners have frequent, sometimes weekly, visits by assessors. Vocational and key skills assessment effectively identifies areas of learners' knowledge which needs development. Most of the individual coaching and assessment are good and help learners to develop new knowledge and skills. Assessors ensure that new learners understand what they need to do to complete the NVQ units and key skills. They are encouraged by assessors to accept responsibility for cross-referencing evidence. Learners accept key skills as an integral part of their programmes and demonstrate considerable competence in gathering evidence. Positive relationships are developed with learners. Assessors are readily available to learners by telephone and make additional visits to give individual support.

18. Some of the vocational and key skills training is carried out using laptop computers which do not have industry standard software. Some of the NVQ and key skills learning resources are not good.

19. Links between assessment and the training given by employers are very well developed. Employers offer a wide range of good on-the-job training opportunities, such as coaching by a supervisor, attendance at in-company training or externally provided training events. Assessors, learners and employers work together to agree these training activities. Co-ordination of these opportunities with the training needs and assessment of learners is good. The introduction of new business processes or products are successfully used as assessment opportunities for NVQs and key skills.

20. The systems for supporting some aspects of the programme in the workplace are poor. Workplace supervisors who become responsible for learners after the learners' induction period have inadequate information. Procedures are not in place to ensure their understanding of the structure, content and requirements of learners' programmes. There are no effective systems in place to ensure that the supervisors understand their role in supporting the learners through witness testimony.

21. Some learners have a poor understanding of Davidson Training's equal opportunities policy. Learning materials on equal opportunities are not used effectively. Reviews are often ineffective in checking learners' awareness of equal opportunities. Most reviews do not give learners sufficient opportunities to consider issues in the workplace that may affect them.

22. All learners are assessed to identify their basic skills needs. Currently, there are no learners in administration identified as needing additional literacy and numeracy support.

Good Practice

One learner is being sponsored by their employer to attend an external training programme which was selected by their assessor to meet a personal development need.

Retailing, customer service & transportation**Grade 3**

Programmes inspected	Number of learners	Contributory grade
Work-based learning for young people	125	3

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

STRENGTHS

- very good retention rates
- good development of learners' job skills
- very effective links with employers

WEAKNESSES

- insufficient use of initial assessment
- weak long-term target-setting

OTHER IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED

- better use of employer training
- better assessment planning

23. Retention rates are very good. During 2000 and 2001, 39 per cent of advanced modern apprentices reached the end of their planned learning programmes. This increased to 73 per cent between 2001 and 2002, and all advanced modern apprentices who started during 2002 and 2003 are still in learning. During 2000 and 2001, 52 per cent of foundation modern apprentices reached the end of their planned learning programmes. This increased to 74 per cent between 2001 and 2002 and all foundation modern apprentices who started during 2002 and 2003 are still in learning. Past achievement rates for advanced modern apprentices are poor. Between 2000-01 and 2001-02, 32 per cent of the advanced modern apprentices completed the full framework. During the same period, 50 per cent of foundation modern apprentices completed the full framework.

24. Learners' job skills have developed well since the start of their programme. Training is meeting learners' needs and aims and they feel more confident. Learners say that the training has given them the chance to think about the way they do things at work and find out information for themselves. Training has also made them more confident in

working with their colleagues and dealing with customers. All workplaces are appropriate for the training programmes and employers state that the training has improved learners' performance at work. Some learners have been promoted in to more responsible jobs. Employers see the business benefits and are willing to have more of their employees on training programmes. Learners can use laptop computers and dictating machines, which are taken into the workplace by assessors to support the background knowledge training.

25. Links with employers are very effective. Staff at Davidson Training work hard to develop good links and rapport with a range of local and national organisations that are committed to developing their employees. Assessors are in regular contact with employers to ensure that learners do not experience difficulties during their training. Since the original inspection, employers are more involved in reviewing the learners' progress. Since the original inspection, assessment visits have increased and assessors now visit learners every two weeks. Learners' confidence and motivation have improved. Induction is satisfactory and takes place in the workplace. Learners are given a good induction pack and their understanding of health and safety and equality of opportunity is checked through questionnaires. The organisation also produces a useful induction pack for employers.

26. There is inadequate use of the initial assessment. All learners are assessed for their current level of key skills and there is a skills scan to match the learners' job to the appropriate NVQ. The results of key skills tests are recorded on most individual learning plans, but the scores and feedback are not given to learners. Some learners are on a lower level of key skills training than is indicated by test results. Initial assessment does not take into account the learners' prior experience or time in their job. Assessment planning sets most learners the same tasks despite individual differences in prior knowledge.

27. Long-term target-setting is weak. Learners are visited in the workplace every two weeks, and their progress is reviewed and further targets are set. Most of the learners are clear what they have to achieve between reviews, but in some cases targets are insufficiently detailed or challenging. The review form, known as the training and assessment record, has been introduced since the original inspection. It enables staff to review learners' progress against a set of standard criteria and overall has improved short-term target-setting. There are no long-term targets. Learners are not aware of the overall progress they are making towards completing the full framework. It is not possible to measure whether learners are making the progress expected of them over a period of time. Learners believe that they are making good progress, but in some instances this is not the case. Some learners do not achieve their qualification within the stated time.

28. Assessment practice is satisfactory. There is a range of evidence in portfolios, particularly for advanced modern apprentices. In some cases, learners are already competent at particular tasks but assessment does not take place at the beginning of their programme. Internal verification takes place on an ongoing basis and assessors are

given written feedback for continuous improvement. Some employers offer their own in-company training and assessors record the training that learners take part in, on a regular basis. However, this training is not linked to the overall training programme.

29. Initial assessment identifies additional support needs for literacy or numeracy. Davidson Training has procedures in place for learners to receive this additional support if required. A plan to support a learner who has dyslexia has not been implemented.

Hairdressing & beauty therapy**Grade 3**

Programmes inspected	Number of learners	Contributory grade
Work-based learning for young people	38	3

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

STRENGTHS

- good progress reviews
- very good practical skills training
- well-resourced training environment

WEAKNESSES

- poor understanding of key skills
- poor achievement rates for foundation modern apprentices

OTHER IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED

- better recording of the co-ordination of training

30. Progress reviews are good. Reviews are regular, comprehensive and support the learners. Appropriate and challenging targets identify what the learners are expected to achieve and by when. Employer involvement in the review process is good. Targets are negotiated with the learners and employers and take account of the learners' rate of progress. When an employer cannot be present, Davidson Training ensures that they are made aware of their learners' progress and they are invited to comment on the targets set. Assessors have good communication with employers, such as frequent telephone contact, to co-ordinate training to help learners achieve their targets. However, this co-ordination of training is not well recorded.

31. Learners are given very good practical training by qualified staff who work to a high commercial standard. A wide range of hairdressing models is carefully matched to learners' needs, to allow each learner the opportunity to develop their practical and creative skills. Assessors encourage learners to develop their own ideas and then consider how they might be achieved. Support for learning is good. Individual tuition is given to learners who need support to develop their practical skills. Additional practical training sessions are offered when they are needed. There are good resource materials

in the form of handouts. This was identified as a strength by Davidson Training in their self-assessment report. Employers take an active interest and encourage learners to progress.

32. Training environments are well equipped and reflect good commercial salon practice. Learners use a wide range of hairdressing equipment and products during their practical training. Manufacturer courses and hair events provide learners with valuable additional skills and knowledge. All the training environments promote professionalism and good technical skills.

33. Assessment and internal verification are satisfactory. Assessment takes place in the academy and at the workplace. Two internal verifiers ensure that sampling of assessment practice is planned and takes place. This has been developed since the original inspection. Internal verification and sampling are easily monitored and can be checked through learners' portfolios. Observation of assessors is fully recorded and good feedback is given. The internal verifier checks recommendations made to the assessor to ensure their full implementation. At the original inspection, this was identified as a weakness.

34. Achievement rates are poor for foundation modern apprentices. Only seven of the 34 learners who left the programme between 1999 and 2002, completed the full framework. Achievement rates for advanced modern apprentices are satisfactory. Of the 10 learners enrolled between 2001 and 2003, eight are still in learning and are making satisfactory progress towards the full framework. The retention rates for advanced modern apprentices are satisfactory. Sixty-seven per cent of advanced modern apprentices were retained in 2001-02. The four learners who started in 2002-03 are still in learning. Past retention rates for foundation modern apprentices have been poor. In 2000-01, the retention rate was 45 per cent, and in 2001-02 it was 49 per cent. Of those who started during 2002-03, 93 per cent of learners are still in learning.

35. Learners have a poor understanding of key skills. Most learners are not aware of the level of key skills training they are receiving or how they will be assessed. Since the original inspection, key skills have become an integral part of the vocational training but learners have insufficient understanding of the relevance of key skills to their framework. For all new learners key skills are now introduced at the beginning of the programme.

36. Learners have an induction at the start of their programme, which includes an initial assessment of their basic skills. The induction also includes information on health and safety, the requirements of their qualification and equal opportunities. Equality of opportunity is not sufficiently reinforced during the learners' programme and learners have a very limited recall of it.

37. All learners are tested during induction to determine levels of literacy and numeracy. Systems are in place to offer support to learners who need help with assignments and background knowledge work. This is carried out by staff from

Davidson Training who have been trained to teach basic skills. There is some evidence in learners' files of support sessions. Records show the frequency and duration of sessions, and the work content. Learners who are receiving basic skills support feel that their support is adequate. There is no evidence of any structured teaching basic skills or retesting to record developments.