

INSPECTION REPORT

Academy Education Ltd Reinspection

09 September 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 **learn^{direct}** 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

Academy Education Ltd was established in 1991 as a private school for hairdressing training. It resulted from the amalgamation of the Robert Fielding School of Hairdressing and the Morris School of Hairdressing, which had been offering hairdressing training for over 20 years. The organisation remained a private school until 1998, when it gained a contract for hairdressing training for the Focus Central London Training and Enterprise Council. In July 2000, the organisation became a mainstream provider with its own contract. All practical and background knowledge training takes place at the organisation's central London premises, in the borough of Westminster, where the organisation shares reception facilities with a separate commercial hairdressing operation. Government-funded learners attend the training school for one week out of every five. All learners are employed with commercial hairdressing organisations in Greater London, including prestigious department stores. There are 34 employers. Academy Education Ltd has a contract with the London Central Learning and Skills Council (LSC). There are 39 learners on modern apprenticeship programmes.

Overall judgement

The Adult Learning Inspectorate's inspection in September 2001 found that work-based learning for young people in hairdressing was unsatisfactory. Overall leadership and management were very weak, while equal opportunities and quality assurance were unsatisfactory. At the end of the reinspection process, all aspects of the provision were found to be satisfactory.

Grades awarded

	Original	Reinspection
Leadership and management	5	3
Contributory grades:		
Equality of opportunity	4	3
Quality assurance	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 communication between training centre staff
- well-focused staff appraisal system
- regular collection of and action on feedback from learners and employers
- good individual support for learners
- intensive off-the-job training
- good portfolios of evidence

KEY WEAKNESSES

- insufficient commitment of some employers to in-salon training
- slow progress in the integration of the communication key skill
- insufficient work-based assessment
- poor retention rates
- insufficient focus on target-setting in reviews

OTHER IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED

- more consistent use of written feedback on assignments
- more consistent recording of equal opportunities discussions during monitoring visits

THE REINSPECTION

1. The reinspection for Academy Education Ltd (the Academy) was carried out in two stages, over a total of nine days. The first visit was on 9th September 2002. The second stage was completed between 25th and 28th November 2002. The Academy had prepared a revised self-assessment report in October 2002. Four employers were visited and interviewed. Twelve learners were interviewed and seven portfolios were examined. Eight learners' files and individual learning plans were examined. Inspectors observed and graded five 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	1	0	4	2	2	1	0	10
Total	1	0	4	2	2	1	0	10

Grades awarded to learning sessions at reinspection

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

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

Grade 3

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

STRENGTHS

- good communication between training centre staff
- well-focused staff appraisal system
- relevant equal opportunities policy
- regular collection of and action on feedback from learners and employers

WEAKNESSES

- insufficient commitment of some employers to in-salon training
- slow progress in the integration of the communication key skill with vocational training

OTHER IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED

- more consistent recording of equal opportunities discussions during monitoring visits
- more external involvement in staff training on equal opportunities

2. Since the inspection of September 2001, a new management information system has been developed and new training staff have been appointed to replace those who left. Much progress has been made in dealing with weaknesses around poor links between on- and off-the-job training. After the original inspection, London Central LSC suspended new starts until the results of the reinspection were known. Communication between training staff is good, with weekly formal team meetings which focus on training and progress of learners. There is an honesty in dealing with and recording problems. The views of individual trainers have been recorded and open discussions have helped ensure harmony among the training team. There is a good understanding of the needs of learners between all staff, and information on every learner can be given without referring to notes. The small training team helps promote good communication. There are regular planned visits to employers, and monitoring visits include learners and the employer. This regular monitoring was not taking place at the time of the original inspection.

3. Staff appraisals are now taking place. The director of training appraises the training staff. The main focus is on the performance of staff as trainers, and the views of the director of training and the trainer are taken into account. Outcomes include development of practical skills to improve the teaching of the hairdressing national vocational qualification (NVQ). Some assessors have expressed an interest in taking

teacher training qualifications and this is being actioned through the appraisal process. Other courses attended include time management, motivation of staff, and key skills. Outside of the appraisal process, there is ongoing team evaluation and updating of training in progress. There are some useful discussions concerning key skills. Trainers have discussions on their weaker areas and appropriate actions are being taken to bring about changes as a result of team evaluations. All staff maintain a log of their continuing professional development.

4. Management information systems have been developed and are maintained by the managing director. A comprehensive series of reports gives useful information on the learners and is used on a regular basis. Reports include progress with NVQ units and scheduled finishing times, prior general certificate of secondary education (GCSE) results as exemptions for key skills, other interests or achievements of learners outside of hairdressing, employer information, monitoring visits, reasons for leaving, and results of surveys.

5. The Academy currently has 34 employers, most of which are now working in partnership to provide in-salon training and witness testimonies. There were no real links between on- and off-the-job training at the time of the original inspection and significant improvements have now been made. Where possible, in-salon training is offered to learners on a regular basis by employers. In many cases, employers ensure that learners are working on models who reflect the hairdressing services being practised at the Academy. Witness testimonies are now being provided by many employers. This is particularly useful with services such as perming, where there is a national shortage of models. One employer has an assessor in place who is carrying out work-based assessments. However, some employers are not fully committed to their own in-salon training. They do not structure their training sufficiently to make it fit in with the work being carried out at the Academy and have not been returning reports of what their learners are doing. The Academy's staff are visiting some employers, but not enough to ensure that employers are involved in work-based assessment. There has been good progress with the key skill of application of number, but progress with communication has been slower, despite staff training.

6. Internal verification is now satisfactory at the Academy. It follows awarding body guidelines and is planned on an annual basis. A second internal verifier is almost qualified, which is allowing the main internal verifier more time to oversee assessment practice. Assessors, including a work-based assessor, are observed and are given written feedback. However, the quality of the written feedback varies.

Equality of opportunity**Contributory grade 3**

7. The company has a concise equal opportunities policy which includes relevant legislation. It has been updated since the original inspection and is now given to all employers, as few have equal opportunities policies of their own. The policy is discussed with employers during monitoring visits, and when a change was made to reflect legislation on disability, a new policy was issued. There is a carefully worded and well-thought-out statement on the suitability of hairdressing as a career for those with disabilities, making it clear that the company would welcome applications wherever they would be feasible. The policy is supported by a separate disability statement which includes details of physical access and commitment to support those with additional learning needs. There is a learners' charter which outlines what learners will receive and what is expected from them. It details the commitment of the Academy to offer equal opportunities training, and the expectation of learners to practice equal opportunities. Learners are aware of the complaints and grievance procedures.

8. The training centre and most salons have good access for those with restricted mobility. Management information on equality is now readily available and is being used by the managing director. Reasons for leaving are carefully monitored to ensure learners have been fairly treated. The lack of new starts due to the LSC's action has made it difficult to maintain the high numbers of learners from minority ethnic groups and men, a strength of the original inspection. The Academy's parent company has a good representation of employed learners from minority groups. Learners can take extra units in African-Caribbean hairdressing or barbering, which often helps in recruiting learners from under-represented groups. There is insufficient recording of conversations about equal opportunities with learners and employers. Although discussed, little is recorded on monitoring forms to show what has taken place. Equal opportunities is regularly discussed at staff meetings and knowledge from outside courses is shared. Although this has raised the awareness of staff since the original inspection, there is insufficient external training to improve the understanding of equal opportunities.

Quality assurance**Contributory grade 3**

9. The quality assurance of training has improved since the original inspection, with a focus on assuring the teaching of practical training and background knowledge. Observation of training staff is being carried out by the director of training, and staff are given constructive written feedback, aimed at improving their performance. Although there are no grades currently given for the observations, new paperwork is in place which will feed graded observations into the self-assessment process. An example is where an induction was observed and feedback was given on ways that the member of staff could standardise information on NVQs with the rest of the training team. There is also some peer observation to promote good practice. This is not yet a strength, but it is having significant impact in improving the understanding of staff on the need to share good practice. Learners are regularly asked to comment on the quality of their training, both on and off the job. The on-the-job feedback includes the in-salon training and the support from the employer. Good use is being made of feedback by the managing director.

10. The managing director of the Academy is the key manager for quality assurance, and the director of training is responsible for managing internal verification. The quality assurance policy covers teaching procedures, self-assessment, action-planning, feedback from learners and employers, statistical monitoring, and procedural review. Audit procedures are in place and quality assurance is beginning to have an impact on the training. At the original inspection, 30 per cent of teaching was judged unsatisfactory, but at reinspection, all sessions were judged to be at least satisfactory. The self-assessment process is satisfactory. The self-assessment report was mostly accurate in its findings and staff have been involved in its production through team meetings. Action-planning is beginning to have an impact on improvements in training. Links are being made with quality assurance processes and the evidence produced from activities such as feedback from learners. Self-assessment grades are realistic. There are procedures in place for all key training activities from induction through to NVQ certification, and final evaluation by learners. Several procedures cover the quality of training, including internal verification and assessment in the workplace. Internal verification is now satisfactory. It is planned in advance and includes observation of assessments, together with useful written feedback to assessors. The one external assessor is included in the internal verification programme.

Good Practice

As well as managers observing staff training, there is observation by peers. Inexperienced trainers have benefited from spending a full day observing an experienced trainer and seeing different approaches to practical hairdressing and theory training.

AREAS OF LEARNING

Hairdressing & beauty therapy

Grade 3

Programmes inspected	Number of learners	Contributory grade
Work-based learning for young people	39	3

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

STRENGTHS

- good individual support for learners
- intensive off-the-job training
- good portfolios of evidence

WEAKNESSES

- insufficient work-based assessment
- poor retention rates
- insufficient focus on target-setting in progress reviews

OTHER IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED

- more consistent use of written feedback on assignments

11. Learners are given good support at the Academy. Some learners who have English as an additional language are given individual support with their work. Trainers regularly go through portfolios with the learners to make sure they understand how to compile evidence for the NVQ and key skills. Learners build effective relationships with the tutors through the support they are given. Good written feedback is given to learners on their practical work and it is recorded on the clients' consultation sheets and on the assignment logbooks. Written feedback on assignments is inconsistent. Some tutors do it well, but others only make general comments. Learners are given daily written feedback through progress reports which records the work carried out and the standard of the work produced. Each learner meets with the trainer at the end of each day during off-the-job training to complete the report.

12. Learners attend off-the-job training for one week in every five for the NVQ at level 2. The intensive week of off-the-job training is favoured by most learners and employers,

rather than traditional day release. They feel they are able to concentrate better for a week and make good progress in that time. Throughout the week they observe regular demonstrations, build up background knowledge, work on blocks and models, complete written work, assignments and compile their portfolios of evidence. The learners work well together as a team and build good relationships with staff and other learners. Many have been on other training programmes and speak highly of the way the Academy's system works. There have been significant staff changes since the original inspection. Trainers now have current commercial skills and offer good practical training. At the end of each week, learners complete an assessment-monitoring sheet, which records outstanding assessments. Practical training and background knowledge sessions are well structured. Session plans are detailed and cover NVQ and key skills requirements. Practical sessions have a good range of clients to ensure that learners are able to cover all aspects of the NVQ. There are more clients than at the time of the original inspection. Training takes place in well-equipped and well-resourced rooms. Learners and staff have good access to a wide range of videos, books and course materials.

13. Learners produce a good standard of practical and background knowledge work, which is reflected in good portfolios. These are clearly referenced and evidence is easy to find. Client consultation sheets support all practical work with written feedback from the client and the tutor. There are also photographs to support some practical and assignment work. The assignments have continued to be of a good standard. The assessment practice at the Academy continues to meet awarding body requirements and assessors work hard to clarify any areas that learners are unsure about. There is one qualified internal verifier and one working towards the qualification to 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 through the learners' portfolios. Observation of assessors is also fully recorded.

14. Initial assessment was originally identified as a weakness but it is now satisfactory. The Academy uses a basic skills initial assessment which records the learners' level of skills. The Academy has also developed a comprehensive initial assessment which covers work style assessment and profile, learning styles, key skills assessment and employer feedback. The initial assessment is sent out to the salon after a learner has been in the workplace for eight weeks, but before becoming a learner with the Academy. However, as no new learners have started a modern apprenticeship since the original inspection, the effectiveness of it has not been evaluated as yet. Some learners and trainers have completed it on a trial basis to ensure the suitability of the wording and format.

15. The Academy has carried out a great deal of development work in key skills since the original inspection. Key skills assignments and activities, particularly in application of number, have been produced to help the learners generate a good standard of evidence. Learners know which work is relevant to the key skills. Development towards the communication key skill has been a little slower, but is being further developed. Trainers are now more aware of the importance of key skills and reference grids are being completed with learners on completion of their work. The Academy is aware of

exemptions towards application of number and communication, and many of the learners are exempt. Trainers have attended key skills workshops to promote a better understanding of key skills.

16. Retention rates are poor but are improving for the advanced modern apprentices. The retention rate for 2000-01 was 10 per cent, but this has now improved to 50 per cent for 2001-02. For the foundation modern apprentices, the retention rate was 48 per cent in 2000-01, but is 57 per cent for 2001-02. There have been no new learners since the original inspection.

17. There is still insufficient observation of learners in the workplace. At the time of the original inspection, there was no evidence from the workplace. A number of the training team now carry out assessments for the reception unit and some technical units in the learners' workplace, which has enabled learners to complete these units more quickly. However, the main observations still take place at the Academy. Additional trainers have been taken on to allow experienced assessors the time to see learners in the workplace, but this is not fully established as yet. Only one salon has a qualified assessor who observes the learners in the workplace. Employers complete an in-salon training report each month, but the recording of information is inconsistent. Some employers give very detailed accounts which could be used as witness testimony, but others are brief or are not completed at all. The Academy has contacted salons on many occasions to stress the importance of their contribution to the learners' progress.

18. There is insufficient focus on target-setting at progress reviews. The review paperwork does not reflect the positive nature of the process which takes place. Learners are fully involved in the process and the progress reviews reflect on what has been achieved. However, the forward planning is not sufficiently detailed to ensure that the in-salon training complements the Academy's training. Equality of opportunity is discussed with the employer and learner but it is not fully explored. The reviews are not focused on the learners' progress, and neither the employer nor the learner are given a copy of the paperwork.

Good Practice

One learner carried out a good client consultation, where the client was advised that due to the chemical processes that had been carried out, perming was not recommended. Treatment and products were recommended to the client.