

REINSPECTION REPORT

British Printing Industries Federation Reinspection

24 October 2003



ADULT LEARNING
INSPECTORATE

BRITISH PRINTING INDUSTRIES FEDERATION REINSPECTION

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 learning within the remit of a single inspectorate. The ALI is responsible for inspecting a wide range of government-funded learning, including:

- work-based learning 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.

REINSPECTION REPORT

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REINSPECTION REPORT

DESCRIPTION OF THE PROVIDER

1. The British Printing Industries Federation Ltd (BPIF) is the principal business support organisation for the United Kingdom's printing, packaging and graphic communication industry and is one of this country's leading trade associations. It is an unincorporated employers' association offering a range of membership services and commercial products, including commercial training. The main activities of BPIF are funded through membership subscriptions and revenue from commercial products. As a trade association BPIF has a network of regional offices and a portfolio of special interest groups to recognise the needs of its member companies.

2. The commercial training part of BPIF contracts with the Learning and Skills Council's (LSC) National Contracts Service to provide work-based learning programmes for young people and more recently to provide work-based learning for adults aged over 24.

SCOPE OF PROVISION

Visual & performing arts & media

3. There are 487 learners in this area of learning. Three hundred and forty are working towards an advanced modern apprenticeship and 41 are working towards a foundation modern apprenticeship. Of those learners working towards an advanced modern apprenticeship, 50 per cent are on a machine printing training programme, 22 per cent are on a print finishing training programme and the remaining 38 per cent are on training programmes in carton manufacture, desk top publishing, pre-press or print administration. Of those learners working towards a foundation modern apprenticeship, 81 per cent are on machine printing training programmes. There are also 106 learners who are over the age of 24 who are working towards national vocational qualifications (NVQs), mostly at level 3. Eighty-one per cent of these learners are on a machine printing training programme. Learners are employed in a variety of specialist organisations. Some learners attend off-the-job training at a college by either day or block release. A BPIF training co-ordinator visits learners every four or five weeks to monitor learners' progress and assess their competence.

ABOUT THE REINSPECTION

Number of inspectors	7
Number of inspection days	34
Number of learner interviews	84
Number of staff interviews	27
Number of employer interviews	33
Number of subcontractor interviews	2
Number of locations/sites/learning centres visited	38
Number of visits	4

OVERALL JUDGEMENT

4. The ALL's previous inspection found that BPIF's leadership and management were very weak, including the company's arrangements for quality assurance and equality of opportunity. Work-based learning for young people in visual and performing arts and media was unsatisfactory. At the end of the reinspection process, all aspects of the provision were found to be satisfactory, apart from the company's arrangements for quality assurance.

GRADES

grade 1 = outstanding, grade 2 = good, grade 3 = satisfactory, grade 4 = unsatisfactory, grade 5 = very weak

	Inspection	Reinspection
Leadership and management	5	3
Contributory grades:		
Equality of opportunity	5	3
Quality assurance	5	4

	Inspection	Reinspection
Visual & performing arts & media	4	3
Contributory grades:		
Work-based learning for young people	4	3
Other government-funded provision		3

KEY FINDINGS

Achievement and standards

5. **Learners develop good practical skills in the workplace.** Most companies plan learners' work effectively to ensure they have a good understanding of the whole business as well as their own specialism. Learners take significant responsibility for

print machinery and for organising their own work. The work which learners produce is good. Many learners also have significant responsibility for finished products and direct customer contact.

6. **Employers offer good on-the-job training.** They also effectively plan for learners to rotate their job roles and broaden their range of skills. Learners are well motivated and feel confident to take on increased responsibility for high-specification machinery. There are good relationships between training co-ordinators, learners, skilled observers and employers. Learners who have recently been recruited to the training programme work towards clear objectives and make satisfactory or good progress.

7. Retention rates have improved since the previous inspection. An increasing number of learners who have started training over the past two years are still in training.

Completion of modern apprenticeship frameworks however, is still poor. Many employers in the printing industry are currently reluctant to reduce the time in which a modern apprenticeship can be completed. BPIF has faced difficulties in immediately improving framework completion rates. Achievement rates for the NVQ aspect of the modern apprenticeship training programme has improved recently. Learners who have recently been recruited to the training programme are now working towards the key skills qualification at the same time as they work towards the NVQ, rather than doing this work at the end of the training programme.

8. **There is slow progress for some learners.** Employers in the printing industry are often reluctant to move away from some of the fundamental concepts of time-served apprenticeships. There is often insufficient recognition of learners' prior experience when they have worked in the industry for some time. Conversely, in some parts of the country learners' progress is good and they are on course to achieve their qualifications before their target date.

9. Fifty per cent of learning sessions observed during the inspection were graded as satisfactory or better. Fifty per cent of learning sessions observed were graded as unsatisfactory.

Quality of education and training

Grades awarded to learning sessions at the original inspection

	Grade 1	Grade 2	Grade 3	Grade 4	Grade 5	Grade 6	Grade 7	Total
Visual & performing arts & media	0	0	1	1	2	0	0	4
Total	0	0	1	1	2	0	0	4

10. Visits to learners in the workplace are frequent and carried out by experienced, well-qualified training co-ordinators. The caseload of some training co-ordinators, however, is too much. For example, one is responsible for 100 learners over a wide geographical area. **Resources for learning are generally good.** Most learners are given time at work to develop their portfolios and write up reports of tasks they have carried

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out. The workbooks developed by BPIF are useful and effectively guide learners through their work and the NVQ. Access to modern industry equipment in the workplace is good.

11. The scope and variety of training programmes available to learners are satisfactory. The range of modern apprenticeships offered meets the needs of the industry and individual employers. Training programmes are generally well planned to ensure that learners have the option of attending a college of further education on day or block release. If this is not practical, they can learn in the workplace. Off-the-job training provided by further education colleges is satisfactory.

12. BPIF provides satisfactory guidance and support to learners. A revised and comprehensive student handbook gives full information on aspects such as health and safety and equality of opportunity. Learners who are experiencing personal problems which affect their learning are supported by BPIF's training co-ordinators and employers. Individual learning plans are sympathetically renegotiated and close liaison with employers ensures that progress is maintained at a pace that suits the learner's changed circumstances.

13. **Current learners are still insufficiently involved in their initial assessment.** Some learners' skills are not being assessed at the beginning of their training programme. Programmes of learning are matched to the tasks learners carry out at work rather than a diagnostic appraisal of individual learners' training needs or learning styles. Learners' literacy and numeracy needs are screened at the discretion of the training co-ordinator. Many learners do not start to compile the key skills portfolio until they have completed the key skills external assessment or finished their NVQ. Learners recruited more recently are starting key skills training and assessment at the same time as they are working on the NVQ.

14. Assessment of key skills is satisfactory and most of the evidence is sufficiently derived from a series of flexible assignments. Learners' NVQ portfolios are also well structured and contain a broad range of evidence. Assessment plans however, are brief and do not sufficiently detail the tasks involved. A significant proportion of the evidence is witness testimony and questions and answers conducted by enthusiastic, but briefly trained, skilled observers. Formative verification, candidate interviews and standardisation exercises have been introduced very recently although there are few records of these activities. Patch managers satisfactorily manage internal verification.

15. While some progress reviews are satisfactory and include clear targets to be achieved by the next visit, **most reviews are assessor led and do not focus on the learner or include their employers**, who make few comments on the forms. Some progress review targets do not challenge learners, and in some cases, learners do not understand the targets set. There is poor recording of pastoral care provided either in the workplace or at college. Equal opportunity discussion is rarely recorded on the review form.

Leadership and management

16. **BPIF produces a comprehensive annual strategic plan**, which together with the company's annual report, clearly highlights the need to define the skills and competences required in the printing industry, and the importance of developing structured training. **BPIF has good links with several external agencies** that it uses to influence the development of a qualification structure and to strengthen the credibility of training in the sector. These links were well established at the time of the previous inspection, and remain a strength. BPIF uses its links successfully to promote careers in printing and to emphasise the importance of qualifications to learners.

17. The management of training co-ordinators has improved, and is now satisfactory. BPIF has introduced a new and critical role of patch manager, to provide good direction and management to training co-ordinators in four geographical regions. All training co-ordinators now have clear targets for the progress and achievement of learners assigned to them. Learners' progress towards these targets is regularly monitored at monthly management meetings. There are satisfactory staff appraisal and development procedures. Co-ordinators' occupational competence and further development needs are regularly discussed as part of audit and appraisal systems.

18. **Managers and training co-ordinators have improved the way they use management information.** Learners' progress records are updated at regular performance meetings, and are routinely checked against internal verification records. The computer-based management information system does not currently produce effective reports containing detailed information about learners' progress. BPIF has produced a number of detailed and specific action plans designed to remedy identified weaknesses. Most of the actions in these plans have now been successfully completed. Action-planning is more precise, plans include more specific targets and progress towards achievement is monitored more closely than during the previous inspection.

19. General literacy and numeracy support is sometimes provided as part of the key skills training. However, there is insufficient planning to ensure the routine and continuous provision of support for these skills is available to learners and employers. **Learners who have literacy and numeracy support needs are often required to continue to work through their training programme unaided or with unstructured support** provided by colleagues in the workplace.

20. Annual surveys of learners' and employers' satisfaction are used to provide feedback for BPIF. However, these data are not used fully in the planning process. Managers regularly audit the assessment and progress review visits of the training co-ordinators for whom they are responsible. BPIF has successfully introduced the concept of project champions. Project champions are specifically nominated members of staff who are given time in addition to their normal duties to act as a focal point of comment and carry out research into areas such as key skills or equality of opportunity. One member of staff is assigned to each area. Training co-ordinators meet with their

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managers in an effort to improve standardisation and share good practice. However, these meetings are not well established and there are still examples of some training co-ordinators working less effectively than their colleagues.

21. Managers are developing more evaluative methods for monitoring quality assurance. These developments are not based on the established quality assurance system which is primarily for compliance and audit purposes. The established system does not provide a sufficiently thorough means of ensuring improvements to the training provision. For example, **BPIF has no formal procedures to monitor the training which learners are receiving or to ensure that it is relevant to their work.** The quality assurance system has not yet had an impact on poor achievement rates or helped the company to overcome some of its weakness, such as those relating to inconsistencies in assessment practice and the quality of progress reviews.

22. BPIF has completed a comprehensive assessment of current working practices relating to equality of opportunity. The company has now successfully dealt with all the action points contained in the development plan devised following the work assessing this topic. A recently formulated equal opportunities quiz, used during induction, is intended to establish learners' understanding of equality of opportunity and to determine what help and information learners may require. Learners who have completed the equal opportunities quiz do not find it memorable. Sometimes learners are not sure of the intention behind questions, and do not appreciate the impact of the company's equal opportunities initiative. A useful equal opportunities good practice guide was completed in May 2003. The complaints procedure was updated at this time and is included in the guide.

23. Performance indicators show an increase in the proportion of female learners, but also show that the proportion of female learners is still disproportionately poor, even in comparison with the number of women employed in the industry. Numbers of minority ethnic or disabled learners are very small indeed. **Equality of opportunity is not sufficiently promoted continuously to learners or employers.**

During the reinspection process, the inspectors identified the following strengths and weaknesses:

Leadership and management

Strengths

- clear strategic direction
- effective links to promote training

Weaknesses

- insufficient continuous promotion of equality of opportunity
- insufficiently effective quality improvement system

Visual & performing arts & media

Strengths

- good development of practical skills
- good on-the-job training
- good learning resources

Weaknesses

- poor completion of modern apprenticeship frameworks
- incomplete initial assessment
- some weak assessment practice
- some ineffective progress reviews

DETAILED REINSPECTION FINDINGS

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

Grade 3

During the reinspection process, the inspectors identified the following strengths and weaknesses:

Strengths

- clear strategic direction
- effective links to promote training

Weaknesses

- insufficient continuous promotion of equality of opportunity
- insufficiently effective quality improvement system

24. BPIF produces a comprehensive annual strategic plan. At the previous inspection, inspectors identified there being insufficient reference to training in the organisation's strategic plan as a weakness. This has now been rectified and the organisation's proposal to provide training to meet the needs of the sector is one of BPIF's key themes for its work in this year's strategic plan. An analysis of the age profile of employees in many companies in the sector had identified that there will be a significant shortfall in the number of skilled workers in the medium term. BPIF is now working towards raising awareness of and the need for planned training with people in the industry. The strategic plan and its accompanying annual report highlight clearly the need to define the skills and competences which employers in the industry will require of their staff. There are clearer references to the need for, and the importance of training in the current strategic plan than is the case at the previous inspection.

25. BPIF has good links with several external agencies that it uses to influence the development of a qualification structure and to strengthen the credibility of training in the sector. These links were well established at the time of the previous inspection, and remain a strength. In recognition of the effectiveness of these links, BPIF was recently named trade association of the year by a national employers' association. BPIF uses its links successfully to promote careers in printing and to emphasise the importance of qualifications for learners.

26. Since the previous inspection, the management of training co-ordinators has improved, and is now satisfactory. BPIF has introduced a new and critical role of patch manager within its organisation. Four patch managers provide good direction and management to a group of training co-ordinators in their particular geographical region. Patch managers and training co-ordinators benefit from good communications systems that keep them well informed about organisational developments. A number of improved communications initiatives however, are very new and have not yet had significant impact on co-ordinators' work. Contracts for part-time training co-ordinators

have been successfully revised, which have led to more equitable treatment, including access to the same appraisal and staff development process as full-time co-ordinators. BPIF is currently carrying out a thorough analysis of the caseload of training co-ordinators in order to establish how many learners they can support effectively. All training co-ordinators now have detailed targets for the progress and achievement of learners assigned to them. Learners' progress towards these targets is monitored at monthly management meetings and action is taken where necessary. A recently revised and simplified training co-ordinators' handbook provides a useful guide for recruiting new learners and subsequently supporting them through their training programme. Co-ordinators attend a series of training days and an annual conference to share common problems and to develop personal and organisational action plans.

27. There are satisfactory staff appraisal and development procedures. BPIF has recently completed a detailed and informative audit of the skills and qualifications of all their training co-ordinators. Co-ordinators' occupational competence and further development needs are regularly discussed as part of audit and appraisal systems. BPIF has been responsive to identified needs in providing externally accredited training in risk management, equality and diversity awareness, and technical updating for the developments in key skills qualifications and technical certificates.

28. There have been a number of improvements in the way in which managers and training co-ordinators use management information, and this is now satisfactory. Thorough systems have been introduced to monitor the progress of learners through their training programmes in considerable detail, and compare this progress with their planned rate of progression. Manual records are updated at regular performance review meetings, and systematically checked against the internal verification records for completed portfolios. Changes are recorded on a spreadsheet that is copied to the training co-ordinator and the learner. A copy is also sent to a computer-based management information system. However, this system is primarily designed to provide financial information for the funding body. It does not have the capacity to effectively report detailed information about learners' progress, and learners' records often cannot be updated for technical reasons.

29. Action-planning is satisfactory. Action-planning is now more precise, includes more specific targets, and progress towards achieving these targets is now more closely monitored than previously. Since the previous inspection, BPIF has produced a number of detailed and specific action plans designed to rectify the weaknesses identified. Most of the actions in these plans have now been successfully completed.

30. BPIF has initial assessment procedures that, when properly used, can identify those learners in need of additional support to overcome barriers to the achievement of their qualifications and completion of their frameworks. Inspectors noted some significant examples where additional support had been purchased by BPIF to support the identified needs of individual learners, in particular for those learners with dyslexia. More general help with literacy and numeracy is sometimes included as part of key skills training. However, there is insufficient planning to ensure the routine and continuous provision of support for these skills is available to learners and employers. Learners who have literacy

and numeracy support needs are often required to continue to work through their training programme unaided or with unstructured support provided by colleagues in the workplace.

Equality of opportunity

Contributory grade 3

31. During the previous inspection, a number of significant weaknesses in equality of opportunity were identified. Since then, BPIF has taken a wide range of steps to rectify these identified weaknesses. In particular, BPIF commissioned consultants to complete a comprehensive assessment of current working practices relating to equality of opportunity and to prepare a development plan to deal with the problems. The action points contained in the development plan have all been completed.

32. BPIF is now working with a number of organisations, including Connexions, to reach a wider audience and to deal with the significant gender imbalance prevalent in the printing industry and in the recruitment of learners to modern apprenticeship training programmes. There is a recently formulated equal opportunities quiz which is used during induction and which the company plan to repeat every six months for the duration of the learners' training programme. It is intended to establish learners' understanding of equal opportunity and to determine what help and information learners may require. It is too early to evaluate the impact this quiz has had on learners' perception of equality of opportunity. A useful equal opportunities good practice guide was completed in May 2003. The complaints procedure was updated at this time and is included in the guide. A revised logbook for learners now includes unambiguous information about recognising discrimination and reinforces the new complaints procedure. A training newsletter, first issued in September 2003, contains other useful information about equality of opportunity and also includes a copy of the complaints procedure.

33. Employers exclusively recruit learners onto the modern apprenticeship training programmes. BPIF has increased the influence they can exert on employers regarding recruitment decisions. A number of staff training events about equality of opportunity have reinforced BPIF's determination to improve this aspect of leadership and management.

34. BPIF has introduced performance indicators which are now regularly reviewed and presented in a format that clearly shows the proportion of male and female learners, the proportion of learners from minority ethnic communities and the proportion of learners with disabilities. Performance indicators for August 2003 show an increase in the proportion of female learners, but also that the proportion of female learners are still disproportionately low, even in comparison with the number of women employed in the industry. The proportion of learners from minority ethnic communities and those with disabilities is very low.

35. After the previous inspection, BPIF took strong and successful action to eradicate problems with inappropriate behaviour and images in the workplace. Equality of opportunity however, is not sufficiently promoted continuously to learners or employers.

Progress review documents prompt training co-ordinators to investigate whether learners feel sufficiently supported about equality and diversity topics. However, training co-ordinators often do not ask the questions or formally record any answers. Learners who have completed the equal opportunities quiz do not find it memorable. Sometimes learners are not sure of the intention behind questions, and do not appreciate the impact of the company's equal opportunities initiative.

Quality assurance

Contributory grade 4

36. There have been a number of improvements to the quality assurance system since the previous inspection. The system is based on ISO 9001 which is an international quality assurance standard, for which BPIF was recently re-accredited. The system is well documented and includes detailed procedures covering the assessment activities of training co-ordinators, as well as procedures for assessing the provision of off-the-job training provided by colleges. Annual surveys of learners' and employers' satisfaction are used to supplement the quality assurance system, although the information provided by the surveys has limited usage when planning improvements. Patch managers regularly audit the assessment and progress review visits of the training co-ordinators for which they are responsible and deal with any problems such as missed visits, missed achievement targets or sections of progress reviews which are not being completed. BPIF has successfully introduced the concept of project champions. Project champions are specifically nominated members of staff who are given time, in addition to their normal duties, to act as a focal point for staff comments and carry out research into areas such as key skills or equality of opportunity. One member of staff is assigned to each area. Patch managers work in pairs to identify and promote the sharing of good practice. Training co-ordinators meet every six weeks as regional groups with their patch manager in an effort to improve standardisation and share good practice. However, these meetings are not well established, and there are still examples of some training co-ordinators working less effectively than their colleagues.

37. Patch managers are enthusiastic and proactive in developing more evaluative monitoring for quality assurance. This is not based on a formal or established part of the quality assurance system, which is primarily a compliance and audit system. The formal system does not provide a sufficiently sound means of ensuring quality improvement. Around 20 per cent of learners attend college for key skills or technical certificate learning sessions. Patch managers or training co-ordinators visit the colleges three times a year to complete an audit, but this is confined to checking that the college is complying with the agreed contract. There is no formally established procedure to monitor the training that learners are receiving, or to ensure that it is relevant for their work. Patch managers do not use college inspection or self-assessment reports to supplement their audit procedures. The quality assurance system has not yet had sufficient impact on the poor achievement rates, nor has it completely overcome some of the weaknesses, such as inconsistencies in assessment practice and the quality of some progress reviews.

38. The updated self-assessment report was not available to inspectors before the inspection. The head of commercial training, using contributions from patch managers

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and training co-ordinators, was preparing a draft report. The draft report includes a combination of actions currently being taken and plans for future actions. It recognises some of the key weaknesses which inspectors found but underestimates the significance of others and does not identify the weaknesses in assessment and progress review practices that inspectors found. Many of the strengths identified in the draft self-assessment report were considered to be normal practice by inspectors.

AREAS OF LEARNING

Visual & performing arts & media

Grade 3

Programmes inspected	Number of learners	Contributory grade
Work-based learning for young people	381	3
Other government-funded provision	106	3

During the reinspection process, the inspectors identified the following strengths and weaknesses:

Strengths

- good development of practical skills
- good on-the-job training
- good learning resources

Weaknesses

- poor completion of modern apprenticeship frameworks
- incomplete initial assessment
- some weak assessment practice
- some ineffective progress reviews

Achievement and standards

39. Learners develop good practical skills in the workplace. Most companies plan learners' work effectively to ensure they have a good understanding of the whole business as well as their own specialism. One learner, when taking inspectors on a tour of his workplace, described in exact and clear detail, the process of book printing from delivery of paper through to print finishing and distribution. Learners take significant responsibility for minding print machinery and for organising their own work. Learners' work is good. Many have significant responsibilities for finished products and for direct customer contact. They are valued members of the workforce.

40. Employers offer good training in the workplace and plan effective opportunities for learners to rotate their job roles and broaden their range of skills. Learners are well motivated and confident in taking on increased responsibility for high-specification machinery. Experienced workplace colleagues give learners valuable guidance on working practices. Employers are committed to helping learners succeed, as they did at the previous inspection. Some employers have good organisational training plans that are linked to the achievement of NVQs and have developed an effective culture of learning within the company. There are good relationships between training co-ordinators, learners, skilled observers and employers. Recently recruited learners work towards clear objectives and make satisfactory or good progress.

41. Retention rates have improved since the previous inspection with increasing numbers of learners who started in the past two years still on their training programmes. Completion of modern apprenticeship frameworks, however, is still poor. Of the 63 people who left the training programme in 2001-02, only seven completed all aspects of the framework. In the previous year, 25 of the 156 people who left the training programme completed the framework successfully. Many employers in the industry are currently reluctant to reduce the time in which a modern apprenticeship can be completed and BPIF have faced difficulties in immediately improving framework achievement rates. Achievement of the main NVQ as part of a modern apprenticeship has improved recently, and learners new to the training programme are starting key skills training and assessment at the same time as they are working on the NVQ, rather than doing this work at the end of the training programme as happened previously.

42. There is slow progress for some learners. Inspectors noted one learner who has been on the training programme for four months who has no measurable achievements. Some learners have taken over two years to achieve an NVQ at level 2. Despite good support for skills development in the workplace, employers in the industry are often reticent to move away from some of the fundamental concepts of time-served apprenticeships. There is often insufficient recognition of prior learning and experience. Some learners compound their slow progress and do not achieve targets that are set during reviews. Conversely, in some parts of the country, learners' progress is good and they are on course to achieve their qualifications before their planned completion date.

Quality of education and training

43. Visits to learners in the workplace are frequent and carried out by experienced, well-qualified training co-ordinators, who are also assessors, and who validate the evidence from skilled observers. The caseload of some training co-ordinators, however, is too much. For example, one is responsible for 100 learners over a wide geographical area. BPIF has made it a condition of their agreement with employers that the employer trains some of their staff to act as skilled observers of learners' work. This is a valuable arrangement which helps learners gather evidence effectively and assists assessors in making decisions about learners' competence. This arrangement is currently being reviewed to identify possible improvements. Resources for learning are generally good. Most learners are given time at work to develop their portfolios and write reports about tasks they have carried out. Those learners who are most effectively supported, often have access to computers to help word process evidence and to research topics on the internet. The most supportive skilled observers guide learners in the best way to present evidence. The workbooks developed by BPIF are useful and effectively steer learners through their work and the NVQ. The workbooks have recently been revised and although they are improved, they now contain unnecessary repetition, which is frustrating for those learners and observers who do not have a good knowledge of the NVQ standards. Access to modern equipment in the workplace is good. As learners' skills develop, they are increasingly respected as members of the workforce with responsibility for working on high-specification equipment. Many learners can develop

their skills in a real work environment.

44. The scope and variety of training programmes available to learners are satisfactory. The range of modern apprenticeships in pre-press, print, print finishing and print administration available to learners under 25 years of age, and of NVQs available to learners aged over 25, meets the needs of the industry and individual employers. All learners are on training programmes that directly relate to their job role. Learners have a good understanding of how they can progress, either with further study or by obtaining more complex skills during and on completion of their training programmes. Training programmes are generally well planned to ensure that learners have the option of attending a college of further education on day or block release, or if this is not practical, they can learn in the workplace. Off-the-job training provided by colleges of further education is satisfactory. One college of further education provides good online learning materials. Learners enjoy attending the college for block-release training. They also enjoy being able to work with online materials when at home or in the workplace. The college provides good online support to assist learners with this work, including e-mail or telephone support.

45. Most employers work well with BPIF's training co-ordinators to ensure that each learner gains experience in all aspects of print, which allows learners to produce the necessary evidence for the modern apprenticeship framework. Assessment visits are carefully planned and often take place at unsocial hours to ensure that learners working shifts are not disadvantaged. Some of the most supportive employers have arranged for learners to visit facilities related to the print industry such as paper mills, tanneries and chemical manufacturers. In exceptional cases, some employers have arranged for learners to attend courses based on outdoor pursuit activities to encourage personal development.

46. BPIF provides satisfactory guidance and support for learners. BPIF has worked effectively with Connexions to produce a range of careers materials, specifically designed to appeal to young people. The well-structured induction to training explains exactly what learners are expected to achieve, how they will learn, what support is available and when they will complete the framework. A revised and comprehensive student handbook gives detailed information about topics such as health and safety, and equality of opportunity. An equivalent handbook for training co-ordinators enables them to refer learners who need specialist help to external agencies, such as organisations that support people with dyslexia. The current handbook, however, does not address topics such as disability or a wider range of health concerns or social problems. BPIF's training co-ordinators and employers provide support for learners who are experiencing personal problems which affect their learning. Individual learning plans are sympathetically renegotiated and close liaison with employers ensures that the learners' progress is maintained at a pace that suits the learner's changed circumstances.

47. Current learners are still insufficiently involved in their initial assessment. Some learners' skills are not being assessed at the beginning of their training programme. Initial assessment was judged to be poor at the previous inspection. Inspectors noted two learners who had worked towards NVQs at level 2 and were making good progress, who

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were then later assessed to be potential level 3 candidates and had their programmes changed accordingly. Training programmes are matched to the tasks which learners carry out at work rather than to a diagnostic appraisal of individual learners' training needs or learning styles. Learners' literacy and numeracy needs are screened at the discretion of the training co-ordinator. A diagnostic key skills assessment has recently been introduced, but some learners have completed this too late in their training programme to use it as a basis for an individual learning plan which meets their needs. Many learners have not started key skills portfolios until they have completed the key skills external assessment or finished their NVO. Learners recruited more recently are starting key skills. An innovative, industry referenced, psychometric testing kit has been piloted in to provide support for employers' recruitment processes, but has not yet generated sufficient interest to be used more widely.

48. Some poor assessment practice was identified at the previous inspection. Since then, assessment practice has improved, but some weaknesses remain. Assessment of key skills is satisfactory and most of the evidence is sufficiently derived from a series of flexible assignments. Learners' NVO portfolios are also well structured and contain a broad range of evidence. Assessment plans however, are brief and do not sufficiently detail the tasks involved. In-house assessors and skilled observers are often not consulted during assessment-planning. A significant proportion of the learners' evidence is witness testimony, and questions and answers conducted by enthusiastic, but briefly trained skilled observers. Some of these skilled observers have not completed the required training and others reported that the training was poor. Some learners are encouraged to collect excessive amounts of evidence that is not referenced to the NVO standards, and which is not authenticated or validated quickly. Learners are not given written feedback justifying assessment decisions. Continuous verification, candidate interviews and standardisation exercises have been introduced very recently although there are few records of these activities. Patch managers satisfactorily manage internal verification.

49. The progress review process has improved since the previous inspection, however some aspects of progress reviews remain unsatisfactory. While some progress reviews are satisfactory and include clear targets to be achieved before the training co-ordinator's next visit, most progress reviews are led by the assessor and do not focus on the learner or include employers. Employers make few comments on the progress review forms. The first half of the progress review form is often completed by the training co-ordinator without consulting the learner. Most progress reviews simply go back over the previous assessment and state the targets on the next visit, on the second half of the form. In some cases, progress review targets do not challenge learners, and in others, learners do not understand the targets they are set. Many learners do not achieve all the targets in the planned time and these are deferred to subsequent visits. There is poor recording of pastoral issues, workplace training and college-based work. Discussion of equal opportunities topics is rarely recorded on the progress review form.

Leadership and management

50. Many aspects of the training programme are now well managed. There have been a number of initiatives since the previous inspection to improve learners' experience. Learners' progress is better monitored and there is now increased training for staff in areas such as key skills and equality of opportunity. BPIF has introduced patch managers who have improved the monitoring of training co-ordinators and have given a much clearer focus to internal verification. Internal verification activities have increased, and there has been increased sampling of assessment. Inspectors identified some concerns over assessment practice. Some learners' training programmes incorporate a college course to support background knowledge and key skills qualifications. However, the separate learning activities in the workplace and at the college are not sufficiently planned or co-ordinated, and some learners feel they are repeating work.

51. Some of the strengths identified by BPIF in the self-assessment report were seen as normal practice, while some weaknesses identified by inspectors were not identified by BPIF. Learners' awareness of equality of opportunity topics is not sufficiently promoted. Equality of opportunity is rarely discussed at reviews, although an equal opportunities quiz has been introduced to improve understanding. BPIF has taken action to deal with instances of inappropriate behaviour in the workplace. For example, BPIF has ensured that inappropriate posters displayed in the workplace have been removed. However, promotion of the wider concerns such as increasing women's participation in training, has yet to be done effectively.