

INSPECTION REPORT

Gordano Training

13 January 2003



ADULT LEARNING
INSPECTORATE

Grading

Inspectors use a seven-point scale to summarise their judgements about the quality of learning sessions. The descriptors for the seven grades are:

- *grade 1 - excellent*
- *grade 2 - very good*
- *grade 3 - good*
- *grade 4 - satisfactory*
- *grade 5 - unsatisfactory*
- *grade 6 - poor*
- *grade 7 - very poor.*

Inspectors use a five-point scale to summarise their judgements about the quality of provision in occupational/curriculum areas and Jobcentre Plus programmes. 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
- **learndirect** provision
- Adult and Community Learning
- training 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.

Overall judgement

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.

Provision will normally be deemed to be inadequate where:

- more than one third of published grades for occupational/curriculum areas, or
- leadership and management are judged to be less than satisfactory

This provision will be subject to a full reinspection.

The final decision as to whether the provision is inadequate rests with the Chief Inspector of Adult Learning. A statement as to whether the provision is adequate or not is included in the summary section of the inspection report.

SUMMARY

The provider

Gordano Training is a privately owned company which covenants all of its profits to its parent company. It has sites in Bristol, Clevedon and Weston-super-Mare. Gordano Training offers work-based learning for young people. Twenty-seven learners are on training programmes in business administration, 56 are on training programmes in construction and 130 learners are on Gordano Training's Entry to Employment programme. Gordano Training is a pathfinder provider for the new Entry to Employment programme which will replace Life Skills provision. Three learners are following national vocational qualifications in customer service. This area was not inspected because of the low number of learners.

Overall judgement

The quality of the provision is adequate to meet the reasonable needs of those receiving it. More specifically, Gordano Training's leadership and management are satisfactory, as is its approach to equality of opportunity, but its quality assurance arrangements are unsatisfactory. The quality of work-based learning in foundation programmes, business administration and construction is satisfactory.

GRADES

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

Construction	3
Contributory grades:	
Work-based learning for young people	3

Business administration, management & professional	3
Contributory grades:	
Work-based learning for young people	3

Foundation programmes	3
Contributory grades:	
Work-based learning for young people	3

KEY STRENGTHS

- particularly good support for learners
- good retention rates on foundation programmes
- open and responsive management
- exceptional recognition of, and attention to, learners' diverse needs

KEY WEAKNESSES

- insufficient involvement in training by employers
- incomplete quality assurance
- weak progress reviews

THE INSPECTION

1. Six inspectors spent a total of 23 days at Gordano Training (Gordano) in January 2003. Inspectors conducted 78 interviews with learners and 40 interviews with Gordano's staff. They visited all three of Gordano's sites and observed and graded 16 training sessions. They examined 32 portfolios of evidence and 32 individual learning plans. Inspectors visited 16 work placements and interviewed 15 employers or workplace supervisors. A range of documents was examined including Gordano's development plan, policies and procedures, minutes of meetings, management information and reports from awarding bodies. Inspectors studied Gordano's most recent self-assessment report, which was written in October 2002, as well as previous annual self-assessment reports dating back to June 1998.

Grades awarded to learning sessions

	Grade 1	Grade 2	Grade 3	Grade 4	Grade 5	Grade 6	Grade 7	Total
Construction	0	0	2	1	0	0	0	3
Business administration, management & professional	0	0	2	1	0	0	0	3
Foundation programmes	0	0	1	8	1	0	0	10
Total	0	0	5	10	1	0	0	16

THE PROVIDER AS A WHOLE

Context

2. Gordano is a privately owned company which covenants all of its profits to its parent company. Gordano has the same managing director as its parent company, but is autonomous. It has sites in Bristol, Clevedon and Weston-super-Mare. It was established in 1983 in North Somerset as a private company providing courses in commerce, retailing, warehousing, care and prevocational courses. It merged with a construction training company in 1990 and moved to its current premises in Bristol. In 1999, Gordano was purchased by Brunel Training Group, but continued trading in its own name. The senior management team consists of the managing director, executive manager, company secretary and three senior managers. The executive manager is responsible for the operational management of the company and for the company's policies and procedures. She is also active as an internal verifier. The company secretary is responsible for the financial management and the financial policies and procedures. The executive manager and the company secretary report to the managing director. A team of co-ordinators has responsibility for specific areas of the company. Gordano manages its own training, using no subcontractors. The company has expanded rapidly over recent years and currently employs 40 staff, of whom eight work part time. Thirteen of the staff are directly involved in the training, assessment and internal verification of government-funded learners. The assessors and internal verifiers hold, or are working towards, appropriate assessor and internal verifier qualifications. One assessor is working towards internal verification qualifications.

3. Gordano trains advanced and foundation modern apprentices and learners working solely towards national vocational qualifications (NVQs) in business administration, construction, and retailing and customer services. Gordano is also a pathfinder provider for the new Entry to Employment (E2E) programme which will replace Life Skills provision. Twelve learners are currently working towards foundation modern apprenticeships in business administration, two are advanced modern apprentices in business administration and seven learners work towards an NVQ in business administration at level 1 or 2. Eleven learners are working towards the foundation construction award and 45 learners work towards NVQs in painting and decorating at levels 1, 2 or 3. There are 130 learners on the E2E programme, working in a range of areas including literacy, numeracy, social and life skills. Some of these learners follow programmes in construction or business administration. The training is funded through West of England Learning Skills Council (LSC) and European Social Fund (ESF) initiatives.

4. The economy of the district in which Gordano operates is dominated by the finance, public administration and distribution sectors which account for approximately three-quarters of all employment. In April 2002, the rate of unemployment in Bristol was 2.4 per cent, compared with 2.1 per cent in the Southwest and 3.1 per cent nationally. Bristol's minority ethnic communities represent 5.1 per cent of the population compared with 1.4 per cent in the Southwest and 6.2 per cent nationally. In 2001, the proportion

of school leavers in Bristol achieving five or more general certificates of secondary education (GCSEs) at grade C or above was 32 per cent, compared with the national average of 47.9 per cent.

Work-based learning for young people

5. There are good retention rates on foundation programmes and satisfactory retention rates in business administration and construction. Achievement and progression rates are satisfactory in all areas. Business administration and construction NVQ learners work in good-quality work placements and are well supported by their employers. Gordano's staff provide a supportive environment in which to learn and pay exceptional attention to learners' diverse needs. Most learners are receiving support for recognised additional learning and/or social needs. Although all learners have an initial assessment of their literacy and numeracy skills, the support they get is not always sufficiently individualised. Employers are not sufficiently aware of NVQ and modern apprenticeship framework requirements. They do not play a full enough part in progress reviews, training or assessment.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

Grade 3

6. Gordano was established more than 15 years ago to provide employment-linked training courses. It has a board of eight elected trustees. The managing director, the executive manager and the company secretary of Gordano attend quarterly trustee meetings. The company has expanded rapidly over recent years and currently employs 40 staff. The senior management team consists of the managing director, the executive manager, the company secretary and three senior managers. The executive manager has responsibility for the operational management of the company and for the company's policies and procedures. The company secretary is responsible for financial management and the financial policies and procedures. The executive manager and the company secretary report to the managing director. There is a team of co-ordinators who have responsibility for specific areas of the company. The senior management team hold monthly meetings to decide policy, discuss operational issues and review processes and targets. There is an equal opportunities policy and quality assurance policies and procedures. The current self-assessment report was produced in October 2002. It is the fifth self-assessment report produced by Gordano Training.

STRENGTHS

- good formal and informal internal communication
- open and responsive management
- particularly good support for staff development
- exceptional recognition of, and attention to, learners' diverse needs

WEAKNESSES

- insufficient use of management information in development planning
- unclear equal opportunities policy and procedures
- too little monitoring of employers' equal opportunities arrangements
- incomplete quality assurance

OTHER IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED

- better involvement of staff in self-assessment
- better recording of equal opportunities team meetings
- more equal opportunities awareness training for staff

7. Formal and informal internal communication is good. There is frequent and open informal discussion at all levels and between departments. Various formal staff meetings are also held at regular intervals, most of which have agendas and formal minutes. Management meetings with trustees take place every quarter. Appropriate matters from these meetings form the basis of the agendas for the monthly management meetings

where senior staff in Gordano are briefed on strategic planning and financial issues. Development planning also takes place in these meetings. Departmental meetings are held at least weekly and these are supplemented by the less formal weekly 'sunrise' meetings where all staff have an opportunity to share information and to brief or update staff from other departments. The executive manager attends a range of different meetings to ensure that staff are well informed of the company's developments.

8. The approach to management at Gordano is open and responsive. The executive manager works closely with the management team and other staff. The management team encourages and welcomes staff involvement. Managers respond positively to staff and learners' comments, suggestions and requests. The views of staff are valued and staff contribute to the planning process. Most organisational developments and changes occur after extensive consultation with staff. For example, before the recent rewriting of the company's policy and procedures manual, staff in all departments were consulted about existing practice and the amendments they wished to see. A company staff development day was used to launch the new manual.

9. Gordano's approach to supporting the development of learners' literacy, numeracy and language skills is satisfactory. All prospective learners have their literacy and numeracy levels tested, but Gordano has not yet made sure that the results of these tests are being passed on to all training staff to ensure that individual needs are met. Gordano has recognised that the development of learners' literacy and numeracy skills can be effectively linked to their vocational work.

10. There is particularly good support for staff development. Staff development needs are identified at their six-monthly appraisals and individual learning plans are drawn up. The current training plans do not show target dates and priorities for training, but they demonstrate a commitment to staff training needs. All staff are encouraged and supported in their continuing professional development. All staff possess the appropriate qualifications for their work at Gordano or they are working towards them. There is also good support for staff development beyond the basic requirements and a clear recognition by managers that basic qualification requirements are only a starting point. Staff are encouraged to work towards qualifications at higher levels such as the stage 2 teaching certificate or the certificate in education. Some tutors have progressed from being learners with Gordano, with good encouragement and support from the company. Gordano is flexible and responsive when dealing with requests from individual staff for further training.

11. There is insufficient use of management information in development planning. Information required for contract compliance is routinely collected and carefully audited. Data from external sources such as demographic or labour market information are also used to help make some management decisions. Other information such as that resulting from learners' and employers' questionnaires is collected, analysed and used to guide some parts of the planning process. However, this information is not used sufficiently to analyse performance and set targets for development, or to make longer-term strategic decisions about the future. There is too little historical data on

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which longer-term analysis can be made. For example, there is little objective information available on the quality of teaching and progress reviews at Gordano.

Equality of opportunity**Contributory grade 3**

12. Gordano has developed a culture of equality and mutual respect within the company. Most learners are referred from Connexions and many have additional learning and/or social needs, or both. Gordano adopts an extremely open and inclusive recruitment policy. Learners from minority ethnic groups make up 11.5 per cent of Gordano's learners, compared with just over 5 per cent minority ethnic representation for Bristol as a whole. There is very effective identification of all learners' needs and Gordano takes exceptional care to recognise and provide good support for learners. All prospective learners are interviewed by the equal opportunities officer. Learners complete an extensive application form that includes questions about their personal circumstances. The form sensitively allows learners to identify personal issues such as low self-esteem or health problems. Gordano provides excellent help over and above that which would be expected. For instance, one learner found work in a location she could not reach by public transport. Gordano provided a taxi until she was able to make suitable arrangements with work colleagues. Another learner did not meet an employers' minimum qualification requirements. Gordano persuaded the company to change its attitude by highlighting the lower proportion of A to C GCSE grades in Bristol compared with the rest of England. Gordano has recruited an additional support worker who acts on behalf of learners when conflict arises and talks through problems with learners. This activity takes place in the calming atmosphere of a well-designed and comfortable room. There is also a very good specialist programme on cognitive and behavioural therapy that is carried out in a separate building nearby with excellent resources.

13. Gordano's approach to using data on equal opportunities is satisfactory. Data are collected about ethnicity, additional learning needs and learners' progression from various programmes. Discussion about statistics and other equal opportunities matters takes place at the monthly equal opportunities team meetings. Minutes of the meetings are kept and specific issues are raised with all staff, but there are no standard agendas and no action-planning with designated staff responsibilities and dates for completion.

14. Gordano's equal opportunities policy refers to all relevant legislation and explains that there are grievance and complaints procedures. Separate documents give further guidance on some aspects of legislation such as that for race relations, sex discrimination and equal pay, but disability discrimination is not well covered. Some references are incorrect and parts of the guidance are out of date. Staff understanding and knowledge of legislation are weak, although they still support learners effectively. Some staff have had training in diversity and equality of opportunity, but this has not been shared with all staff.

15. Gordano requires all employers to sign a training agreement committing themselves to ensure that learners are treated as employees in terms of equality of opportunity legislation. This agreement does not mention the Disability Discrimination Act (1995). There is too little formal monitoring of this agreement. Work placements are carefully planned for E2E learners, but the work-placement providers are not required to comply with any equal opportunities statements. Staff do not formally monitor learners'

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understanding of equality during reviews in the workplace. There is little reinforcement of equality of opportunity after induction other than that required for specific NVQ units. Learners' awareness of their rights and responsibilities is low, although all learners know how to approach staff about such things as bullying or harassment, and know how to make a complaint.

16. Rooms used for business administration have no access for learners with mobility difficulties, but Gordano accommodates these learners on the ground floor of the building. Premises for art are being altered to accommodate an accessible toilet. Construction premises are accessible for learners with restricted mobility.

Quality assurance**Contributory grade 4**

17. The company has a clearly written policies and procedures manual, covering many of its activities, which has recently been reviewed, re-written and updated. All Gordano's sites hold hard copy and CD-ROM formats which are drawn to the attention of all new staff during their induction. Thorough audit checks are carried out on learners' numbers and attendance to ensure compliance with contracts. However, the quality assurance system is incomplete. An 'Excellence in Teaching' programme was introduced during the summer of 2002. This was accompanied by a system for observing teaching and grading learning sessions on a detailed written feedback sheet against a seven-point scale. This system is too new to have yielded significant results. Only 12 staff have been formally observed using this system. Individual feedback is given to each tutor, but no grading profile has been drawn up for particular areas of learning or for the company as a whole. There are no effective ways of assessing the quality of progress reviews. There is no formal mechanism for identifying or sharing good practice in teaching and learning within departments or across the company. The arrangements to meet internal verification requirement are satisfactory in construction and business administration.

18. The self-assessment process has a clear relationship to the company's development planning. Work has been done to improve the procedures for self-assessment. Staff involvement in self-assessment is not always extensive. Some staff are involved in self-assessment and contribute to the report by completing departmental summaries on set forms. Some staff have discussed self-assessment in their departments and provided written feedback. Others have not completed self-assessment forms, but display a good understanding of the process and its relationship to development planning. Other information from surveys of learners' and employers' views contributes to the report.

19. The self-assessment report identified some of the weaknesses in Gordano's provision but overstated some of the strengths which inspectors judged to be no more than normal practice. The self-assessment report is judgmental and comprehensive, but inspectors identified additional strengths and weaknesses which were not included in the report. The accompanying development plan covers the key points in the report and identifies evaluation and monitoring mechanisms. Progress had been made against many actions in the development plan but others have still to be looked at.

AREAS OF LEARNING

Construction

Grade 3

Programmes inspected	Number of learners	Contributory grade
Work-based learning for young people	56	3

20. Gordano has 56 LSC-funded learners working towards foundation construction awards and NVQs in painting and decorating. Eleven learners are working towards the foundation construction awards, 20 learners are working towards an NVQ at level 1, 20 learners at level 2, and three at level 3. There are two foundation modern apprentices. All learners work towards additional qualifications, such as those in manual handling and first aid. In addition, they can attend specialist courses in painting and decorating to increase their skills and experience. Most learners are employed locally. Learners have up to two years to complete their qualification and may join the training programme at any time there is a vacancy. Learners are referred by employers, Connexions, or by word of mouth. All applicants have a comprehensive interview by the equality of opportunity officer and by vocational staff before joining the programme. Once accepted they spend three days with Gordano on an induction programme. This includes initial assessment to determine the appropriate qualification level for them and covers Gordano's policies, procedures and training requirements. Training and assessment for construction is provided by six assessors and one internal verifier. Off-the-job training is provided at Gordano's premises in Bristol. Learners have progress reviews at least every six weeks.

The following tables show the achievement and retention rates available up to the time of the inspection.

Work-based learning for young people																
Foundation modern apprenticeships (FMA)	2002-03		2001-02		2000-01		1999-2000									
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
	Number of starts			1		7		6								
Retained*			0		1		2	33								
Successfully completed			0		0		2	33								
Still in learning			1		1		0	0								

*retained learners are those who have stayed in learning for at least the planned duration of their training programmes, or have successfully completed their programme within the time allowed

Work-based learning for young people																	
NVQ Training	2002-03		2001-02		2000-01		1999-2000										
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	
	Number of starts	14		47		51		41									
Retained*	0		0		33		24	59									
Successfully completed	0		0		25		24	59									
Still in learning	14		32		8		0	100									

*retained learners are those who have stayed in learning for at least the planned duration of their training programmes, or have successfully completed their programme within the time allowed

STRENGTHS

- good use of diverse portfolio evidence
- good health and safety awareness
- good work placements

WEAKNESSES

- weak progress reviews
- poor assessment practice
- insufficient involvement of employers in training

OTHER IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED

- more individualised support

21. The quality of work-based learning in construction is satisfactory. Of the three training sessions observed, two were good and one was satisfactory. NVQ achievement rates are satisfactory. In 1999-2000, the achievement rate for the NVQ was 59 per cent. Of the 51 starters in 2000-01, 49 per cent have achieved the NVQ and eight learners are still in learning. A few learners are making slow progress. Retention rates on the NVQ programmes are satisfactory but improving. Data show that on average, between 1999 and 2001, 67 per cent of NVQ learners were retained until the end of their training programmes.

22. Learners compile good portfolios of evidence which are well structured and contain diverse sources of evidence. The wide variety of evidence meets the requirements of

the NVQ. This includes written notes, assignments, results of observations of assessments and witness statements. Learners include useful site diaries and checksheets on practical evidence which are cross referenced to performance criteria. The paperwork for practical assessments is good. It includes detailed planning sheets, job specifications, materials lists and stores invoices. Where appropriate, there is good use of photographic and video evidence. Learners are fully involved in the organisation and development of their portfolios and each portfolio reflects the individuality of the learner. Portfolios are assembled on a unit basis, but the results of observations are cross referenced to other units of the NVQ. Assessors set assignments to help learners produce evidence for their portfolio and give good guidance on collecting evidence in the workplace. Written feedback to learners on submitted assignments is not sufficiently detailed. For most of the background knowledge requirements learners are issued with good notes and diagrams.

23. Learners demonstrate good health and safety awareness. This was not identified as a strength in the self-assessment report. Health and safety is frequently promoted and reinforced. Learners closely follow strict health and safety regulations in the workshops and on work placements. In one work placement, on a project renovating a local church, learners work with highly corrosive chemicals. They learn the correct use of a wide range of safety equipment including breathing respirators, as well as safe use of scaffolding and good practice in working at height.

24. Gordano provides good work placements for its learners. Employers offer good training opportunities in painting and decorating which enable learners to develop new skills. The placements give a wide range of learning and assessment opportunities. Learners gain and show many appropriate painting and decorating skills. Most learners can develop and practise the skills required for their NVQ in their work placement. If they cannot, staff arrange alternative opportunities at Gordano's premises. Employers and workplace supervisors recognise and support learners' needs. Some employers have work-based recorders to provide guidance and support in the workplace. Supervisors take an interest in learners' work. Learners make a significant contribution to the employers as well as developing their own confidence and work skills. They are highly valued by their companies and regarded as full members of staff.

25. Progress reviews are weak. They do not include three-way discussions between the learner, supervisor and trainer/assessor on achievements so far and the planning of short-term achievable targets. Supervisors often sign completed review paperwork and many of their comments are not relevant to NVQ targets. Reviews do not lead to realistic intermediate targets. Target-setting is not specific enough to ensure progress towards the qualification. Targets are not revisited at the next review and learners are not challenged if targets are not met. The distribution of completed review reports is inadequate. The report is not copied to workplace supervisors or learners. Supervisors have too little information to help them allocate suitable work to help learners achieve the goals agreed with the assessor. The learner does not receive a personal copy of the review report to help personal planning. Equality of opportunity is not sufficiently reinforced in all reviews and pastoral issues are not discussed. The format of the review

form is inadequate. It does not allow for recording comments on equality of opportunity and pastoral issues. Individual learning plans are satisfactory, but are not all updated to the same standard. Some plans have all achievement dates the same as the end of funding date and there are no planned dates for unit completion. Personal details are not always updated. There is no clear link between progress reviews and individual learning plans. Most learners do not know that they have an individual learning plan.

26. There is poor assessment practice, a weakness not recognised in the self-assessment report. Learners do not understand assessment requirements or what progress they are making towards their qualification. Many learners have not yet been assessed despite being in training for several months. Other learners have not been assessed often enough in their time on the programme. Assessments are not well planned. Assessors do not liaise effectively with employers or learners to allow employers to plan work in the workplace and help learners gain relevant experience. Feedback on those assessments which have taken place has often not given sufficient guidance to learners on how they could improve. Employers do not play a full enough role in assessment and few assessments take place in the workplace. There is a significant amount of informal contact between assessors' six-weekly visits, but these visits do not generate detailed action plans. Learners do not always achieve their NVQ within the planned timescale, although Gordano continues to support learners for whom government funding has ended. Learners and employers are unaware of target dates for achievement of units or for the planned completion of the qualification. Internal verification procedures are thorough, but failed to identify some poor assessment practice. Staffing problems meant that Gordano was unable to keep to its verification schedule for a short time, but this is no longer the case. There is currently no long-term sampling plan, but internal verification happens frequently and is recorded effectively. Internal verifiers observe assessment and provide detailed feedback to assessors along with action plans to encourage improvement. New assessors are observed and given useful guidance. Assessors and internal verifiers meet monthly. Internal verifiers question the learners' understanding of the NVQ and assessment and use learners' responses to give feedback to individual assessors.

27. Employers are not sufficiently involved in training and assessment. Gordano recognised this weakness in its self-assessment report. Many employers allow learners to follow their qualification or take additional qualifications on day release. Some workplace supervisors understand NVQs well and provide good training support to modern apprentices. However, many employers and workplace supervisors have little understanding of the details of the NVQ units and the opportunities for development required by learners to help them progress effectively. Some employers would like more information or an employers' induction pack.

28. There are adequate arrangements for the initial assessment of learners' literacy and numeracy skills during induction. Tests determine the appropriate level for learners to join the training programme as well as identifying any support needs in literacy and numeracy. Adequate levels of support for literacy and numeracy is given. Additional

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support is set in a relevant vocational context. Support is mainly given on a whole-group basis and is not individualised enough to benefit all learners. There are effective meetings and communication between vocational tutors and specialist support tutors.

Good Practice

Some construction learners were having difficulty in maintaining progress on their programme because of literacy problems. Gordano purchased small recording machines for learners to use while they continued to receive additional support to improve their literacy skills. Recordings are converted to text documents using speech recognition software. Video evidence and photographic evidence is additionally used to support these learners until their literacy skills become sufficient to cope with the programme.

Business administration, management & professional**Grade 3**

Programmes inspected	Number of learners	Contributory grade
Work-based learning for young people	27	3

29. Gordano Training has 27 learners on administration training programmes. Two are advanced modern apprentices and 17 are foundation modern apprentices, working towards NVQs at either level 2 or 3 in business administration and an appropriate level of key skills. There are also eight learners following other training programmes leading solely to an NVQ in business administration. Most learners are referred by the Connexions service or hear about Gordano from other learners or employers. A small number of learners apply directly to Gordano through advertisements in the local press. Gordano finds employment for most learners and at the time of inspection only two learners were not in employed positions. One of these two was awaiting an appropriate vacancy and the other was in a work placement. All learners have an induction which lasts between one and two weeks. During this time learners are given an initial assessment to establish their levels of literacy and numeracy and to identify any support they may need during training. A team of five staff carries out assessment and verification of the learners' work. The same staff visit learners regularly in their workplaces to review progress. The staff work from Gordano's main site in Bristol and also at Clevedon or Weston-super-Mare. Approximately two-thirds of learners have off-the-job training at the Bristol, Clevedon or Weston-super-Mare training centres. Learners who cannot attend these weekly day-release classes are given individual coaching by Gordano's staff in their workplace at least every two weeks.

The following tables show the achievement and retention rates available up to the time of the inspection.

Work-based learning for young people																	
Advanced modern apprenticeships (AMA)	2002-03		2001-02		2000-01		1999-2000										
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	
	Number of starts			3		2		7									
Retained*			0		1	50	6	86									
Successfully completed			0		1	50	6	86									
Still in learning			2		0	0	0	0									

*retained learners are those who have stayed in learning for at least the planned duration of their training programmes, or have successfully completed their programme within the time allowed

Work-based learning for young people																
Foundation modern apprenticeships (FMA)																
	2002-03		2001-02		2000-01		1999-2000									
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Number of starts	5		27		24		22									
Retained*	0		8		14	58	14	64								
Successfully completed	0		6		14	58	14	64								
Still in learning	5		12		0	0	0	0								

*retained learners are those who have stayed in learning for at least the planned duration of their training programmes, or have successfully completed their programme within the time allowed

Work-based learning for young people																
NVQ Training																
	2002-03		2001-02		2000-01		1999-2000									
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Number of starts	1		27		25		16									
Retained*	0		10		25	100	8	50								
Successfully completed	0		9		25	100	8	50								
Still in learning	1		7		0	0	0	100								

*retained learners are those who have stayed in learning for at least the planned duration of their training programmes, or have successfully completed their programme within the time allowed

STRENGTHS

- good co-ordination of all aspects of training
- very supportive employers
- particularly good support for learners

WEAKNESSES

- poor awareness by employers of full modern apprenticeship framework requirements
- some ineffective use of initial assessment

30. There is good co-ordination of on- and off-the-job training. Good communications

OTHER IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED

- more comprehensive records of internal verification

between employers and Gordano's staff ensure that learners are given every opportunity to meet the requirements of their qualification in the workplace. There are many examples of Gordano's staff arranging specific training in response to learners' identified workplace development needs. Learners were observed using newly acquired skills to improve their performance in the workplace, the benefits of which are recognised by the employers. One learner was learning to use spreadsheets and put these skills to immediate effect by developing an updated system for recording aspects of his employer's accounting requirements.

31. Most employers are very supportive to their learners and frequently offer them the chance to work in job roles outside their normal job description. Learners can gain the training opportunities they need to develop skills across the full range of the qualification requirements. Many employers give learners time to attend Gordano for day-release training. They play an active part in the frequent review meetings held to monitor learners' progress. Some employers also offer study and revision time to learners carrying out specific assessments. Many learners are encouraged and supported to take additional qualifications.

32. Learners benefit from particularly good support from a team of qualified assessors. This good support was identified as a strength by Gordano in its self-assessment report. The support is not limited to training and work-related matters, but extends to supporting learners with personal or health-related difficulties which may otherwise prevent them from completing their training. Gordano's staff frequently visit the learners in the workplace to review progress, give tuition and assess the learner for the NVQ. Most learners are visited weekly or fortnightly, with the visits often lasting a number of hours. All learners are given the opportunity to develop knowledge and practical skills during off-the-job training. The sessions are held in well-equipped, spacious training rooms. At the time of inspection, approximately two-thirds of learners were attending day release. The training sessions are run by appropriately qualified staff who are wholly committed to the development of the learners. Gordano has an appropriate range of learning materials, including text books that learners can use for study outside the classroom.

33. Although most employers offer good practical support to learners, some are not sufficiently aware of all aspects of the qualification requirements. They cannot help learners to make best use of the workplace to generate evidence for key skills. Most employers have a general awareness of the requirements of the NVQ but few possessed a detailed knowledge of the requirements for key skills. Gordano recognised this as a weakness in its self-assessment report.

34. Learners' initial assessment is quite comprehensive, including an assessment of basic numeracy and literacy, as well as key skills, as appropriate. The assessment includes

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tests designed to identify certain specific problems with reading and writing. The initial assessments also identify the learners' preferred learning style. However, the results of these tests are not always adequately communicated to other members of staff responsible for giving the training or developing individual learning plans. The assessment should determine the level of basic skills support most appropriate to an individual, but some learners were receiving tuition which may not have been required or at a pace which did not reflect their ability. A member of the business administration team is qualified to teach literacy and numeracy. Recently, a new system has been introduced where learners receive additional support from this team member instead of attending the basic skills department, but it is too early to measure the success or otherwise of this initiative.

35. Retention and achievement rates are satisfactory. The internal verification procedures are satisfactory and reflect recent initiatives to improve the quality of internal verification generally stipulated by the joint awarding body. The records of internal verification, however, are not fully comprehensive and do not detail adequately interim verification.

Foundation programmes

Grade 3

Programmes inspected	Number of learners	Contributory grade
Work-based learning for young people	130	3

36. Gordano has been providing Life Skills training since 1999. In September 2002, it became a pathfinder training provider for E2E, a new national initiative for 16 to 18 year olds who are not yet ready to enter mainstream training, employment or further education. The programme aims to equip young people with the skills to become independent and able to take control of their lives. There are 130 learners on E2E training. Ninety-six learners are at the Bristol training centre, the remainder attend training at either the Clevedon or Weston-super-Mare centres. Most young people are referred by Connexions and can join the training programme at any time during the year. The programme consists of up to four stages. Stage one is a period of induction and initial assessment that lasts for two weeks. Stage two concentrates on in-house training, development, outdoor activities and short periods of work experience. This stage lasts for approximately 26 weeks, depending on individual needs. Learners who demonstrate satisfactory attendance and timekeeping move on to either longer periods of work experience or NVQ training. Learners are required to attend training for 16 hours a week during the initial stages and may increase attendance to 25 hours. In-house training and qualifications are available in literacy and numeracy, social and life skills, construction, business administration, graphics and fine art. Training staff act as personal tutors for a group of learners and carry out reviews of progress every two weeks. A personal adviser from Connexions is based on site in Bristol to offer additional support and guidance to learners. A qualified social worker is available to support young people with behavioural and emotional problems.

The following table shows the achievement and retention rates available up to the time of the inspection.

Work-based learning for young people																	
Life Skills	2002-03		2001-02		2000-01		1999-2000										
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	
	Number of starts	159		195		149		98									
Retained*	11		133		91	61	64	65									
Successfully completed	11		71		74	50	57	58									
Still in learning	130		0		0	0	0	0									

*retained learners are those who have stayed in learning for at least the planned duration of their training programmes, or have successfully completed their programme within the time allowed

STRENGTHS

- good retention rates
- good development of personal and social skills through creative initiatives
- particularly good support for learners

WEAKNESSES

- poorly defined programme structure
- insufficiently specific target-setting

OTHER IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED

- better room temperature control

37. Retention is good and improving. Since the start of E2E in September 2002, 92 per cent of starters have remained in learning. In 2001-02, the retention rate on the Life Skills programme was 68 per cent and in 2000-01 it was 61 per cent. Achievement rates are satisfactory. However, there is no information on the completion of overall learning objectives as individual learning goals are not clearly defined and recorded. Fifty-five per cent of learners progressed into further training or employment in the current contract year. This is an increase from the previous years' figures of 33 per cent in 2001-02 and 50 per cent in 2000-01. Since the start of E2E, all those learners who were entered for basic skills tests have been successful. However, the first test learners are entered for is normally below their current assessed level. Some learners who have few or no qualifications benefit from gaining basic skills qualifications. However, for others there is too much emphasis on training for the acquisition of a basic skills certificate, rather than the development of specific literacy and numeracy skills. Some learners also achieve additional qualifications including those in health and safety, first aid, manual handling and sports coaching.

38. There is good development of learners' personal and social skills through creative initiatives, as identified in Gordano's self-assessment report. The art projects challenge young people to think more openly, by presenting them with creative tasks that require reflective attitudes. Learners work well together to design and produce murals and art projects in the local community. For some learners, art activities are successfully used to explore personal and social problems as well as future career options. Learners carry out good voluntary placements in youth clubs and sport centres. Two learners are now employed part time as assistant youth leaders. For other learners, a wide programme of off-site activities encourages effective team and personal development. Most learners recognise the increased confidence, self-esteem and motivation they gain through these

activities.

39. There is particularly good support to assist learners in overcoming personal and social difficulties that may be a barrier to successful learning. Tutors are skilled and experienced, and have a good understanding of the difficulties and problems learners face. Tutors provide practical guidance and refer learners to other agencies that can deal with specific problems such as homelessness or alcohol and drug misuse. Recently introduced breakfast clubs give learners the chance to have something to eat before starting the training day. There is a skilled full-time worker on site who is employed by Connexions. This worker effectively forms supportive relationships with the learners and acts as an advocate for them. Where appropriate, he attends fortnightly reviews of progress between learners and personal tutors. Gordano employs a qualified social worker who provides behavioural therapy and counselling to those who may benefit. These preventative support mechanisms enable learners' difficulties to be tackled early and help to prevent learners leaving early. At two sites there is particularly strong support from Connexions personal advisers, who give ongoing guidance and opportunities for learners to talk about problems. Communication between the personal advisers and training staff at these sites is good.

40. The structure of the programme is poorly defined. The programme has grown considerably in numbers since its introduction in September 2002, and there has been high staff turnover. The new programme management arrangements are not fully effective in ensuring appropriate consistency in practice and implementing the E2E programme. There are no clear staff guidelines or procedures for how the programme should be taught. The programme is interpreted differently on different sites and between tutors. Some elements of life and social skills training rely too much on specific staff interest and skill. The core curriculum is still being developed and is currently poorly defined. There is a lack of clarity in the content of the programme and the standards learners are expected to achieve. There are insufficient links between elements of the programme. For instance, work experience is not effectively linked with the rest of the learners' programme. Although the learners have regular pastoral visits, there is insufficient information to employers and learners about the goals, purpose and duration of the work placement. Some learners are unclear about the content and duration of the programme, particularly in its first two stages. Learners who move into a clearly defined occupational area are more informed.

41. Target-setting is insufficiently specific. Initial assessment includes the recently introduced literacy and numeracy tests that meet the national core curriculum for basic skills. Learning styles, reading and spelling abilities and occupational aptitude are also assessed. The information from these tests is not always used to plan short-term measurable goals for learning. There are no individual learning plans. The general development plans being used are not always fully completed and training needs are not sufficiently defined. Milestones for achievement are not always set or recorded. Where milestones are identified, they are not sufficiently broken down into achievable steps of learning.

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42. Training and learning resources are satisfactory. Life and social skills learners are fitted into weekly timetables as a group and not on the basis of individual need. Specific learning goals are not set during life and social skills or basic skills training sessions. Targets set during progress reviews are insufficiently specific. Learners do not have copies of their review paperwork and some learners cannot remember their targets. Accommodation is of a satisfactory standard, with appropriate space, lighting and facilities. However, a suitable temperature is not always maintained in some training rooms. The art room is particularly cold and unsuitable for long training sessions following the weekend closure. Other rooms are poorly ventilated and become too hot.