

INSPECTION REPORT

Three A's Pertemps Training Limited

24 March 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
- **learnirect** 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

Three A's Pertemps Training Limited is a private company, formed in 1983 to provide training for young people with learning difficulties in rural North Warwickshire. Three A's Pertemps Training Limited now operates from Nuneaton and Coventry and provides foundation programmes and work-based learning in business administration, information and communications technology, retailing and customer service, and hospitality. Training in information and communications technology was not inspected, as there were too few learners.

Overall judgement

The quality of the provision is not adequate to meet the reasonable needs of those receiving it. More specifically, leadership and management and quality assurance are unsatisfactory but equality of opportunity is satisfactory. Work-based learning is unsatisfactory in business administration, retailing and customer service and hospitality but the foundation programmes are good.

GRADES

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

Business administration, management & professional	5
Contributory grades:	
Work-based learning for young people	5

Retailing, customer service & transportation	5
Contributory grades:	
Work-based learning for young people	5

Hospitality, sport, leisure & travel	4
Contributory grades:	
Work-based learning for young people	4

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Foundation programmes	2
Contributory grades:	
Life Skills	2

KEY STRENGTHS

- good range of work placements
- good support for learners

KEY WEAKNESSES

- inadequate quality assurance
- ineffective internal verification
- poor management of training
- poor achievement rates

THE INSPECTION

1. Eight inspectors spent a total of 31 days at Three A's Pertemps Training Limited (Three A's) in March 2003. They carried out 38 interviews with staff, interviewed 79 learners and 24 work-placement supervisors, and visited 30 work placements. Inspectors observed and graded nine learning sessions and examined a range of documents, including learners' portfolios of evidence, individual learning plans, policies and procedures, records of meetings, promotional material, achievement data and reports from awarding bodies and the local Learning and Skills Council (LSC). Inspectors also examined the most recent self-assessment report, which was produced in May 2002.

Grades awarded to learning sessions

	Grade 1	Grade 2	Grade 3	Grade 4	Grade 5	Grade 6	Grade 7	Total
Business administration, management & professional	0	0	0	1	1	0	0	2
Hospitality, sport, leisure & travel	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	1
Foundation programmes	0	1	4	1	0	0	0	6
Total	0	1	4	2	2	0	0	9

THE PROVIDER AS A WHOLE

Context

2. Three A's is based in Nuneaton and has training centres in both Nuneaton and Coventry. It employs 25 staff, of whom four work part time. Three A's provides work-based learning for 193 young people. The learners follow national vocational qualifications (NVQs) and modern apprenticeship programmes. There are also 98 Life Skills learners on a 16-week programme for disadvantaged young people.

3. The main employment sectors in Coventry and Warwickshire are manufacturing, construction, distribution, hospitality and catering. The 2001 census shows that the proportion of people from minority ethnic groups is 16 per cent in Coventry, compared with a national average of 6.2 per cent. In 2001, the unemployment rate in Coventry and Warwickshire was 4 per cent compared with the national rate of 3 per cent. In 2001, the proportion of school leavers achieving five or more general certificates of secondary education (GCSEs) at grades C or above was 40 per cent, compared with 47.9 per cent nationally.

Work-based learning for young people

4. Work-based learning for young people in business administration, retailing and customer service, and hospitality is unsatisfactory. The co-ordination of on- and off-the-job training is poor. Key skills training is inadequately integrated with vocational programmes and many learners do not achieve their key skills qualifications until they have completed their NVQs. Achievement is poor in some areas, although there have been recent improvements in business administration and retailing and customer services. Assessment practices are unsatisfactory and internal verification is inadequate. Learners receive good pastoral support from Three A's staff, and good use is made of external agencies. New staff are following training programmes to achieve assessor and internal verifier awards.

Life Skills

5. Life Skills provision is good, particularly at the Three A's City Skills training centre. The varied and flexible programme is well organised and encourages many young people previously disengaged from education into formal learning and training. There is good learning and pastoral support from Three A's staff and good use of other agencies to deal with some of the more specialist problems of the learners, such as drug and alcohol misuse, homelessness and offending behaviour.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

Grade 4

6. Three A's moved to its present premises in Nuneaton in 1988. In November 2002, the company opened a Life Skills training centre in Coventry called City Skills. The managing director is responsible for strategic and overall business management. There is a team of five managers covering marketing, administration, quality assurance, operations and the City Skills project. The team has been developed over the last 12 months in many aspects of business including management techniques. There are regular management team meetings ensuring consistency of approach, and team members are familiar with one another's areas of responsibility.

7. Three A's has quality assurance and equal opportunities policies and procedures. The quality manager has overall responsibility for quality assurance issues but each manager carries responsibility for quality assurance in their areas.

8. In 1994, Three A's achieved the Investors In People award, a national standard for improving an organisation's performance through its people. This has twice been re-assessed successfully. The management team expends considerable time and effort in ensuring all staff are well trained in their roles.

STRENGTHS

- good communication between staff
- good staff appraisal system
- active marketing to under-represented groups in response to local needs

WEAKNESSES

- inadequate support for new staff
- poor management of training
- inadequate implementation of quality assurance
- ineffective internal verification
- poor monitoring of equality of opportunity in the workplace

9. Internal communication at Three A's is good. Members of staff have a clear understanding of the company's mission statement and its aims and objectives. Each member of staff has a clear job description and well-defined roles and responsibilities. Managers at all levels are available to meet staff as required. The work environment is relaxed and there is a good exchange of information between staff. Staff are aware of any changes and issues in the company. There is a well-developed meeting structure with meetings scheduled six months in advance. Key meetings include a weekly staff communication meeting to review learners' progress, and a monthly staff meeting which covers company business, equal opportunities, and health and safety. The senior

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management team meets every fortnight to review developments and progress against targets. Minutes are taken and action points recorded with responsibility allocated to individual members of staff. The meetings were not held regularly last year, and there were various staff problems. Communication with employers is less good, with poor co-ordination of off- and on-the-job training.

10. Three A's staff appraisal systems are good. Each member of staff completes a self-assessment questionnaire before an interview with the managing director every year. There is also a three-monthly review, which has recently been implemented. This has been used effectively and the meetings recorded. The review entails a full discussion of performance and training needs, resulting in the agreement of an action plan with the member of staff. The action points are clearly specified and given a timescale. The process is well documented, and paperwork is logged in the member of staff's file. The file also includes a copy of the curriculum vitae, the job description and training requirements, the personal development requirements, awarding body updates, training courses, and occupational competence updates. There are good opportunities for staff development. Development needs are identified through the staff appraisal system and the line manager gives approval for the training. There is a range of in-house training courses and trainers are also brought in from outside. The courses include health and safety, basic and key skills updates, drug awareness, dealing with behavioural problems, and occupational skill updating.

11. There is a good staff induction programme, part of which requires new staff to join the learners' induction sessions. Induction covers all the necessary areas such as health and safety, quality assurance and equal opportunities, and is subject to a comprehensive checklist. Although new staff at the Nuneaton site are well supported by their line managers and through team meetings, they do not receive sufficient support on the job. Training needs are identified but not always met. Staff new to assessment are not supported by letting them shadow colleagues, or given mentors to guide them. There are insufficient accompanied visits to learners and too little advice is available. There are not enough staff to provide this level of support.

12. The management of training is poor. Retention and achievement rates are poor in all areas of learning. Learners make slow progress in their achievement of modern apprenticeship frameworks. Three A's has been slow to introduce strategies to improve retention and achievement rates. Targets set for staff have concentrated on the recruitment of new learners rather than the success of established learners.

13. The management team has started to use management information more effectively. Data about learners are collected but have not, until recently, been used effectively to monitor retention and achievement rates. Learners' progress review dates and individual NVQ units achieved are now recorded on the management information system. It is too soon to judge the impact of these developments on retention and achievement rates.

Equality of opportunity**Contributory grade 3**

14. Three A's quality assurance manager has overall responsibility for equality of opportunity. The equal opportunities policy meets the legal and LSC contractual requirements. It is explained to all new staff and learners in an equal opportunities awareness session during their induction period. The self-assessment report identified the lack of formal training in equality of opportunity, and all staff have now attended a one-day training session. Online equal opportunities support resources have recently been made available to staff through Three A's intranet. At present, there is little use of this material to support a greater understanding of equality and diversity by learners.

15. Staff provide good role models to learners by encouraging tolerance and understanding. Racism and harassment are not tolerated, and staff take immediate action to deal with inappropriate language or behaviour. Where action is taken, it is sensitive towards all involved.

16. There is active marketing of the training provision to meet local needs. LSC data are used to identify areas where marketing will be most effective. This has led to increased recruitment of learners from minority ethnic groups to the City Skills project. Marketing materials are of good quality and available in a variety of languages to increase accessibility. The marketing material is given to parents as well as learners, to increase their awareness and understanding of the programmes available. The new teachers' pack is valued and well used by local schools and Connexions staff. The marketing team have a high profile at careers conventions and other community events. The proportion of learners from minority ethnic groups is 22 per cent, which is 6 per cent higher than the proportion of people from minority ethnic groups in the local population.

17. All employers are expected to have an appropriate equal opportunities policy. However, some employers or work-placement providers have been used by the company for several years but do not have a policy. All new employers have policies that are checked by training officers. The absence of a mechanism to follow up employers without an adequate equal opportunities policy is identified in Three A's self-assessment report. There is little active promotion of equality of opportunity in the workplace. Learners have a basic understanding of their employment rights and responsibilities, and most are clear about whom to approach if difficulties arise at work. They are asked if they want to discuss equal opportunities issues during their progress reviews, but there is little practical development of their understanding of equality and diversity after the initial induction.

18. Three A's main premises consist of a converted factory and a neighbouring house. Few adaptations have been made to the buildings to meet the needs of learners with physical disabilities or sensory impairments. The main Life Skills training room is inaccessible to learners with mobility difficulties. If a learner with mobility difficulties is referred to Three A's, classroom activities can be transferred to a ground floor room. Three A's City Skills site is fully accessible with a lift to the first floor.

Quality assurance

Contributory grade 4

19. Three A's has extensive policies and procedures relating to all aspects of quality assurance such as health and safety, recruitment, complaints, grievances, harassment, and equal opportunities. A senior member of staff is responsible for the management of quality assurance. All staff are issued with a copy of the quality assurance manual at induction, and it is updated regularly. The policies are explained to learners during their induction. The policies and procedures are clearly set out and comply with current legislation. The manual includes details of the conditions necessary for contracting with employers and the procedures to be implemented in the event of non-compliance. For example, the action that needs to be taken if an employer does not have an equal opportunities policy. Most staff and learners are aware of the quality assurance arrangements but there has been poor implementation of some procedures, particularly in the management of training. In the past, staff have failed to follow agreed working practices, such as frequency of progress reviews or assessments. Three A's was slow to deal with poor performance and in several cases was unaware of it. The improved use of the management information system enables managers to monitor learners' progress and the regularity of reviews more effectively.

20. Complaints are recorded formally, and a response is required within a specified time. Action taken is logged and fed back to the management. There is also a non-compliance recording procedure where any part of the company that does not comply with the recommended procedures can be reported for action. This is separate to the complaints procedure and is used to deal with issues such as misuse of documents or late submission of data. It is also used inappropriately for identifying learners' additional learning or social needs and other issues unrelated to non-compliance. The provider has limited means of evaluating the learners' experience. There is no formal, confidential mechanism for learners to evaluate all aspects of their learning. A system of telephone surveys of learners has recently been introduced. Learners' views are formally recorded and their responses are forwarded to the relevant managers. Many of the negative responses refer to the time when there were many staff changes. The system is too new to have had an impact on the quality of training.

21. Three A's has been carrying out self-assessment since 1999. The latest self-assessment report was produced in May 2002 and was the third. A subgroup of the quality assurance committee was selected to meet regularly to discuss and collate evidence for self-assessment, although all staff were consulted through staff meetings. The self-assessment process forms the main vehicle for continuous improvement. This leads to the development plan, which works towards building on strengths and eliminating weaknesses. The quality assurance team carries out reviews and the management team monitors overall performance and evaluates continuous improvement. The quality assurance team drafted the most recent report, which was then discussed with staff and submitted to the managing director for approval. The self-assessment process is good, but the self-assessment report is insufficiently critical. There are weaknesses which have not been identified, for example, the lack of detail in progress reviews, weak internal verification, and the lack of support for new staff. The problems

arising from the staff turnover occurred after the self-assessment report had been written.

22. There are detailed procedures for monitoring learners' progress and for internal verification, but there are clear shortcomings in the implementation of the procedures. There is no monitoring of training in some workplaces, and some progress reviews are not monitored or observed. Progress reviews are not recorded in sufficient detail, and the deadlines and timescales identified are vague. Internal verification is weak, with no sampling plan or programme of planned observations. Staff do not always have the necessary experience and appropriate qualification to carry out internal verification. Internal verification is not identifying weak practices such as the lack of assessment. There are few standardisation meetings in some areas of learning.

AREAS OF LEARNING

Business administration, management & professional

Grade 5

Programmes inspected	Number of learners	Contributory grade
Work-based learning for young people	30	5

23. There are 30 learners on business administration and nine on information and communications technology (ICT) programmes. All the learners are employed, some of them at Three A's. Learners can start their programme at any time of the year. There are two advanced modern apprentices in accounting, two in management and one in using ICT. Fourteen foundation modern apprentices are following programmes in administration, seven in reception and three in accounting. One learner is following an NVQ in accounting at level 4, one an NVQ in management at level 3, six an NVQ in ICT at level 2 and two an NVQ in ICT at level 1. The ICT learners do not appear on the data tables below. All learners have initial assessments of their literacy, numeracy and key skills. Learners participate in an induction programme at the beginning of their programme, either at the Nuneaton office or in their work placement. The training officer visits workplaces to provide training, guidance and support, to observe learners at work, and to plan and carry out assessments. He also carries out regular workplace progress reviews, which are recorded and involve workplace supervisors. Off-the-job training in key skills and background knowledge is given individually at the company's premises. All other business administration training is carried out on the job by workplace trainers, mentors or supervisors. ICT training takes place in classrooms at the Nuneaton training centre.

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		1998-99		1997-98					
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Number of starts	2		6		14		26		10		9					
Retained*	0		0	0	1	7	6	23	3	30	3	33				
Successfully completed	0		0	0	2	14	9	35	2	20	0	0				
Still in learning	2		0	0	1	7	1	4	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		1998-99							
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Number of starts	13		23		12		24		4							
Retained*	1		14	61	8	67	10	42	3	75						
Successfully completed	2		2	9	2	17	6	25	2	50						
Still in learning	10		13	57	1	8	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		1998-99		1997-98					
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Number of starts	2		21		22		20		48		62					
Retained*	0		11	52	15	68	13	65	17	35	22	35				
Successfully completed	0		7	33	15	68	12	60	13	27	13	21				
Still in learning	2		0	0	0	0	0	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 range of work placements

WEAKNESSES

- poor co-ordination of training
- poor use of learners' reviews
- poor rate of achievement of modern apprenticeship frameworks
- poor assessment practices

24. Most learners are in good work placements that offer a wide range of tasks to meet the requirements of the modern apprenticeship framework and NVQs. Many learners move between job roles and departments to broaden their experience. Most workplace supervisors are strongly committed to training and development, and support their learners well. Three A's has suffered from numerous staff changes during the past 12 months. There have been insufficient meetings between learners and training officers during this time, and learners are not fully aware of their progress. New officers have

been appointed and the situation is improving.

25. Co-ordination of on- and off-the-job training is poor. This was not identified as a weakness in the self-assessment report. Teaching and learning plans fail to link on- and off-the-job training, key skills training, and assessment effectively. Tutors do not involve workplace supervisors effectively in support of the learners. They also fail to monitor the quality of on-the-job training.

26. Learners' progress reviews are poor in business administration and ICT. Tutors do not refer to learners' individual learning plans. There is inadequate monitoring of learners' awareness of equality of opportunity. Workplace supervisors are not sufficiently involved in reviews. Some poor questioning techniques are used. Learners are given insufficient encouragement to express their views, and some reviews fail to identify learners' concerns about their progress. The action plans generated are poor. Targets lack detail and are ineffective at helping learners' progress towards achievement of their qualifications. The self-assessment report failed to identify this weakness. However, there are some better reviews. In one, a very experienced and supportive workplace supervisor at Three A's participated effectively and recalled sessions where she and the learner had learned new computer packages together.

27. Key skills training is not integrated with the vocational qualification. Key skills are not taught until late in the training programme. Some learners do not achieve their key skills qualification until some months after they achieve their NVQ. Key skills are not explained well to learners and supervisors. Many are unclear about the key skills requirements, and do not regard them as an integral part of the programme.

28. Achievement and retention rates are poor for advanced modern apprentices. Learners' progress is slow. Many have been training for a year or more, but have little evidence in their portfolios. There is insufficient assessment. Tutors' feedback on learners' progress is inadequate. Many learners do not know what they have achieved or what remains to be done to complete their qualification. Use of target dates to motivate learners and highlight achievement is ineffective. Individual learning plans are not amended to reflect learners' progress or difficulties.

29. Assessment and internal verification practices are insufficiently thorough. There are too few qualified, vocationally competent and experienced assessors for the qualifications offered. There is insufficient support for unqualified assessors. Newly qualified assessors are not given sufficient opportunities to share the good practice of more-experienced colleagues. Mentoring is ineffective. Internal verifiers do not follow good practice on the support of trainee assessors. They fail to ensure that assessments are countersigned where appropriate. There is insufficient assessment by observation in the workplace. Many workplace supervisors are not familiar with the NVQ requirements and are insufficiently involved in the assessment of learners. Some witness statements do not support assessment decisions. Monitoring of learners' progress is inadequate. It fails to identify some learners' slow progress.

Retailing, customer service & transportation**Grade 5**

Programmes inspected	Number of learners	Contributory grade
Work-based learning for young people	50	5

30. There are 49 learners in retailing, customer service and transportation. Twenty-six learners are on customer service programmes of whom 14 are foundation modern apprentices, seven are advanced modern apprentices, and five are on NVQ training programmes. Of the 16 distribution learners, there is one advanced modern apprentice, seven foundation modern apprentices and eight learners on NVQ programmes. There are eight retailing learners of whom six are foundation modern apprentices, one is an advanced modern apprentice and one is on an NVQ programme. All learners are employed by independent companies. There are two qualified assessors who visit learners in their workplaces every two to three weeks to carry out assessments and progress reviews. Three A's and the employers provide an initial induction to the NVQ and the workplace. Learners are given an overview of the programme and an initial assessment of their key skills and occupational aptitude. Training is provided in the workplace and at Three A's premises. The occupational area is co-ordinated by the operations manager who carries out most of the internal verification. Learners have access to advice and counselling services.

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		1998-99		1997-98		1996-97			
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Number of starts	6		6		6		4				1		2			
Retained*	0		1	17	3	50	1	25			1	100	0	0		
Successfully completed	0		0	0	2	33	0	0			0	0	0	0		
Still in learning	6		2	33	1	17	0	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

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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	8		48		37		25									
Retained*	0		23	48	17	46	13	52								
Successfully completed	0		1	2	10	27	3	12								
Still in learning	8		16	33	2	5	1	4								

*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		1998-99		1997-98					
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Number of starts	12		25		24		28		43		32					
Retained*	1		14	56	9	38	13	46	19	44	11	34				
Successfully completed	0		0	0	6	25	12	43	16	37	6	19				
Still in learning	9		5	20	0	0	0	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 progress in the workplace by learners

WEAKNESSES

- weak assessment practices
- late start on key skills training
- poorly structured training
- poor achievement rates

OTHER IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED

- more learning resource materials
- better use of individual learning plans

31. Learners, whether starting their programme on a work placement or in existing

employment, make good progress in the workplace. This was identified in Three A's self-assessment report. There are good promotion opportunities. Employers provide on-the-job training to develop learners' skills and knowledge. Some employers send learners on off-the-job training courses, while others have structured in-house training programmes. One learner started in a post room, was promoted to receptionist and head receptionist and is now office executive. Another learner who started on a three-month work placement four years ago, was employed at the same company and is now a sales co-ordinator. A number of learners have had the opportunity to take additional NVQs as they have gained promotion. Some have moved to level 3 programmes after completing a level 2, or have achieved NVQs in different areas. Employment and work-placement providers offer a safe working environment and are subject to annual health and safety audits.

32. There are weak assessment practices. Some learners have been collecting evidence for several months without referencing it to the awarding body's standards. Assessors' observations are often not referenced to the standards. There is poor planning of assessments. Inspectors observed assessments which started without any reference to any agreed assessment plan. Learners do not know what they are going to be assessed against. Employers are not always informed of assessments and are unable to plan work duties to help prepare the learner for assessment. Assessment decisions are not always explained. Learners' product and knowledge evidence is not sufficiently challenged by assessors with follow-up questioning to ensure standards have been met. When learners are questioned, their answers are not always recorded. Witness statements are inadequate. Assessors fill in the evidence matrices. Some matrices are completed in pencil and have been signed by the assessor before the learner has completed the element. Portfolios are generally satisfactory and well structured but in many cases the assessor takes the lead in putting the portfolio together. Assessment is insufficiently thorough, particularly for NVQs at level 3. Inappropriate evidence is sometimes accepted by assessors. Assessors do not have sufficient qualifications and occupational experience to assess NVQs at level 3. There is insufficient evidence of unqualified assessors' work being countersigned. There is insufficient support for new assessors. Internal verification is inadequate, and is not identifying the concerns over assessment. There is insufficient observation and monitoring of assessment. There is no sampling strategy. The awarding body's action points on assessment and internal verification have not been dealt with. Learners' unit achievement is recorded centrally but there are no formal review meetings held between the operations manager and assessors to review and monitor learners' progress.

33. There is late introduction of key skills training to learners' vocational programmes. Several months elapse before key skills evidence collection and assessment commences. One learner who started training in February 2002 has yet to receive any key skills assessment. Some learners are unaware of the key skills requirements and are unsure of what they need to do. There is no initial assessment of key skills in information technology. Any support need is not identified until later in the programme. Although key skills exemptions are identified, this often happens after the learner has unnecessarily completed an initial assessment. Learners sometimes miss

their key skills tests because they are not allowed time away from work.

34. Training is poorly structured. Initial assessments identify any specific training need in occupational skills and knowledge or in key skills. However, there is inadequate planning, co-ordinating and recording of how this training need is to be met. There is only a vague reference to on-the-job training. Initial assessment is not always successful in identifying the appropriate level and optional units for the learner. A few learners at level 3 struggle to achieve because their job role does not allow them to collect evidence to meet the level 3 criteria. Training given by employers is sometimes recorded at learners' progress reviews but it is not co-ordinated with off-the-job training. Training activities are not used to plan assessment. Many employers have little involvement with the programme. They rarely participate fully in reviews, although they sign the review document and add a comment. Reviews are not used to look at the target dates set for unit achievement on individual learning plans. Elapsed target dates are not replaced by new ones. Learners are not given copies of their individual learning plan.

35. There has been slow progress for many learners. High staff turnover has resulted in gaps of many months between assessors' visits. This has delayed achievement and demotivated learners. Action has been taken to improve the situation and new assessors are making frequent visits to the learners. Learners now feel they are making progress and are better motivated. There are still delays in assessment, and the late introduction of key skills training is still affecting learners' progress and achievement. Of the 13 advanced modern apprentices who started programmes between 1996-97 and 2000-01, only two have successfully completed their modern apprenticeship framework. During the same period, of 62 foundation modern apprentices, 13 achieved the framework. Between 1997-98 and 2001-02, 127 learners started NVQ-only programmes. Forty successfully achieved their NVQ. Retention rates for all areas have improved and are generally satisfactory.

36. All non-employed learners recruited are given an initial assessment of their basic skills. Employed learners have an initial assessment of their key skills in number and communication. If the key skills initial assessment results are below a certain level, the employed learner will then take an initial assessment for basic skills. Learners with identified basic skills needs work through a resource pack and are supported by extra visits from the assessor. However, identified literacy and numeracy needs are not always met. One learner who has progressed from Life Skills provision has yet to receive any additional support for literacy and numeracy. Learners are given resource packs designed by assessors to support the development of their knowledge and understanding. There is insufficient resource material to support all NVQs.

Hospitality, sport, leisure & travel**Grade 4**

Programmes inspected	Number of learners	Contributory grade
Work-based learning for young people	39	4

37. The provider offers foundation and advanced modern apprenticeship training across all sectors of the hospitality industry. It also offers programmes leading to NVQs in hospitality for learners for whom a modern apprenticeship is not appropriate. There are 39 learners in total. Four are advanced modern apprentices, 17 are foundation modern apprentices and 18 learners are on NVQ programmes. Two of the advanced modern apprentices are following programmes in hospitality supervision and the other two are restaurant learners. Of the 17 foundation modern apprentices, six are on public house programmes, six on quick service, three on food and drink service, one on food preparation, and one on a reception programme. There are 12 learners working towards a level 1 NVQ in food preparation and cooking, two in food and drink service, and two in housekeeping. One learner is working towards an NVQ at level 2 in food preparation and cooking and one in hospitality quick service. Learners may join the programme at any time of the year. Some learners join through their employers, some from school, others as a result of referral from Connexions. Modern apprentices are employed in hotels, restaurants, pubs, night clubs and nursing homes. The learners on NVQ programmes, who are not employed, either attend the training centre or are found an appropriate work placement. Most training for modern apprentices is delivered on the job. All learners attend off-the-job training leading to relevant food hygiene and health and safety qualifications. Three A's staff provide key skills training during visits to learners' workplaces. All assessment and verification is carried out by Three A's staff. There are three assessors and one internal verifier. Staff involved in assessment and verification have good industry experience and hold the relevant qualifications. The responsibility for hospitality is held by two managers. One is responsible for learners who attend the training centre and the other manages work-based hospitality provision. Both report to the managing director of the company.

THREE A'S PERTEMPS TRAINING LIMITED

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		1998-99		1997-98		1996-97		
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.
Number of starts	3		8		11		8		10		9		3		
Retained*	0		3	38	0	0	2	25	1	10	3	33	2	67	
Successfully completed	0		0	0	0	0	1	12	0	0	2	22	0	0	
Still in learning	3		1	12	0	0	0	0	0	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

Work-based learning for young people															
Foundation modern apprenticeships (FMA)															
	2002-03		2001-02		2000-01		1999-2000		1998-99						
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.
Number of starts	10		21		30		26		6						
Retained*	0		11	52	6	20	9	35	0	0					
Successfully completed	0		0	0	0	0	4	15	0	0					
Still in learning	7		10	48	0	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

Work-based learning for young people															
NVQ Training															
	2002-03		2001-02		2000-01		1999-2000		1998-99		1997-98				
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.
Number of starts	12		25		24		28		43		32				
Retained*	0		14	56	9	38	13	46	19	44	11	34			
Successfully completed	0		0	0	6	25	12	43	16	37	6	19			
Still in learning	10		8	32	0	0	0	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

- wide choice of programmes
- good support for learners

WEAKNESSES

- insufficiently realistic conditions for assessment in training centre
- poor achievement rates
- inadequate planning of training
- inadequate access to occupationally specific learning resources

OTHER IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED

- higher level of employer involvement

38. Three A's offers a wide choice of programmes at various levels in hospitality. Care is taken to match target qualifications with learners' career aims and ability, and learning programmes can easily be changed if learners' career aims change. Learners benefit from the training officers' wide range of recent industry experience. Programme choice is further enhanced by links with local employers. These have led to a large range of work placements being available to learners.

39. Staff at Three A's provide good support for learners. Many learners are already employed and have been encouraged to join the programme by employers who recognise the value of qualified staff. The training officers frequently visit learners in their workplaces. The visits are planned to ensure that they take place as often as the learner needs them to. Assessment visits are timed to maximise opportunities for gathering evidence. This includes evenings and weekends if necessary. Staff spend as much time as is necessary to ensure learners receive the support they need. Learners based at the training centre are offered the chance of work experience if this is appropriate. They are sensitively placed to match their career aspirations and particular needs. A comprehensive learning pack has been developed to support learners with identified basic skills needs.

40. Achievement rates are poor. Between 1999-2000 and 2002-03, of the 30 learners who started an advanced modern apprenticeship, one has achieved the full modern apprenticeship framework and four are still in learning. Eighty-seven learners started foundation modern apprenticeships and four successfully achieved the qualification. Eighty-nine learners started NVQ programmes in the same period but only 18 have achieved their qualification. Learners are not being challenged to achieve. On their individual learning plans, some learners are not targeted to achieve NVQ units until well into their programme. In some cases this can be up to a year after starting on the programme. For learners who are working full time in the industry this is neither challenging nor motivating. There are some examples of good short-term target-setting but learners' progress reviews are not always used to set clear targets for the learners to aim for before the next review. The review process does not help learners to move through their programme. Some learners who have been on the programme for a

considerable period of time have only recently begun to work towards key skills.

41. Training is not adequately planned. All learners have an initial assessment of their occupational, key and basic skills where appropriate, but the needs identified are not dealt with in a planned, systematic manner. Learners do not have written plans identifying the training they will receive in the workplace. For most learners on-the-job training is unplanned and not routinely linked with their NVQ. In some cases, learners see in-house training courses as separate from their apprenticeship programme. Learners are unclear how their training programme will develop. Individual learning plans lack detail. Some fail to give completion dates for some parts of the programme. Target dates are not always given for the achievement of technical certificates. There is little reference to learning plans during the programme, and they mean little to the learners. There are detailed lesson plans for the training sessions at Three A's training centre. There is also an outline programme indicating areas to be covered during training days, but this is not given to learners.

42. Insufficient use is made of occupationally specific materials to support learning. The amount and quality of these varies between different workplaces. Some learners have access to textbooks or Three A's training materials, but many do not. Staff are developing support materials linked to NVQ units. Work-based learners are not aware of these and the materials are not routinely made available to them. Their opportunities to develop detailed knowledge and understanding are limited.

43. Assessment in the workplace is satisfactory although internal verification is incomplete. The internal verifier recently transferred to the City Skills project, and the latest system had not been introduced at the time of the inspection. Two members of the hospitality team have recently started working towards internal verifier qualifications. There has been no internal verification for some time and there are no sampling plans in place. There has been little observation of assessment activity.

44. Learners on some level 1 NVQ programmes are assessed in the training centre's kitchen and restaurant. There are serious failings in the standard of hygiene in the kitchen. Window openings and outside doors are not screened. Cleaning routines are ineffective and do not guarantee an acceptable level of hygiene. Working practices are not monitored thoroughly to ensure that they reflect current hygiene practices in the industry. The changing facilities for learners are inadequate. Staffing levels in the kitchen exceed those that would be found in the industry, and workloads are considerably lower. As a result, learners are being assessed in an environment that does not adequately mirror industrial conditions.

Good Practice

A key skills project set for a learner required him to investigate a problem in the workplace. He gave detailed written findings to his manager as well as a verbal presentation. This resulted in clear benefits for his employer and his manager, and a range of good evidence towards his key skills units.

Foundation programmes**Grade 2**

Programmes inspected	Number of learners	Contributory grade
Life Skills	92	2

45. The Life Skills programme runs for a minimum of 16 hours a week over an average of 19 weeks, and is aimed at learners who need additional support, guidance and assistance. There are 62 foundation learners at the Coventry site on Life Skills programmes. There are two full-time and one part-time training officers, one of whom divides his time between the Nuneaton and Coventry sites, one full-time manager, and three part-time staff. At the Nuneaton site there are 30 learners. A full-time Connexions personal adviser, funded by the local LSC, works mainly at the Coventry site but also spends half a day each week at Nuneaton.

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	108		81		109		107									
Retained*	68		31	38	47	43	45	42								
Successfully completed	6		3	4	9	8	12	11								
Still in learning	86		6	7	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 management of Life Skills
- good support for learners
- good induction programme
- good programme of activities

WEAKNESSES

- weak action-planning and target-setting

OTHER IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED

- better referral forms for support
- better organisation of portfolios

46. The Life Skills programme is well managed. It uses an innovative approach to working with the 'hardest to help' group of young people. Three A's City Skills project has developed a drop-in approach to working with Life Skills learners. The learners attend the Life Skills programme when they feel able to cope with it. The learner agrees to attend a set number of training sessions each week for at least 16 hours a week. Learners slowly join the full programme, starting with two to three sessions during the first week and increasing over time. Weekly timetable are given out which learners have to complete and have authorised by their key worker. Activities are posted on the learners' notice board and learners are actively encouraged to put their name forward for the course they are interested in. This approach is effective. Learners who do not nominate themselves for a course are actively encouraged to join other sessions that have places available. The DJ mixing course, run by an external agency, is particularly successful. One learner who excelled on this course subsequently adapted it, produced a training plan, and delivered the course to his peers. The City Skills project also responds to requests from learners. Several of the supplementary courses offered have been requested by the learners themselves.

47. Three A's employs a dedicated learning support officer to work with individual learners and to support staff in dealing with training or pastoral problems. The learning support officer attends every induction and talks to the group about the service she has to offer. There is a strong emphasis on confidentiality, and no information is passed on without the learners' consent. Each learner has an individual meeting with the learning support officer within 10 days of starting the programme, to find out if he or she needs any additional support. There are strong links with external agencies that provide practical support for learners who are less likely to achieve because of drug or alcohol misuse, homelessness, debt, offending behaviour or other difficulties. This allows for a quick response to identified problems. The learner support officer will often accompany the learner to appointments with external agencies. Learners can go directly to a member of staff if they need help and support with social issues. Staff at the City Skills project have helped many learners with problems such as substance misuse, relationship difficulties, unwanted peer pressure, homelessness, health problems and offending or anti-social behaviour. The learner support system helps learners overcome these barriers to success, and motivates and encourages them to attend courses.

48. New learners and staff all go through the same induction programme. The course is delivered at a pace the learner can keep up with. The induction pack is precise, comprehensive and relevant to the needs of the learners. Tutors work alongside learners, supporting those with literacy difficulties and encouraging those with low self-esteem or lacking in confidence.

49. There is a good programme of activities including outdoor activities and practical skills courses, such as plumbing, painting and decorating and car mechanics. Drama, video and music workshops are successful in attracting learners, many of whom have been out of education or training for many months or had negative experiences while at school. Learners commented positively on the value of the activities and how they improved their self-confidence.

50. There is weak action-planning and target-setting. Individual learning plans do not always include the activities learners take part in or use previous achievement to set goals. Targets set in individual learning plans are not sufficiently challenging or progressive for learners. Learning plans are often too general and do not include specific objectives that learners can work towards. They make little reference to literacy, language and numeracy needs. The results of initial assessments are not always used to plan support for learners' key skills activities.

51. Learners' achievement rates are poor, but the data do not accurately reflect the significant successes learners achieve. Some learners who transfer early to other programmes or are given extensions to their programmes are shown as early leavers and then as new starters.

52. The current process for referring learners to learning support is to use Three A's non-conformist form. This form is used for attendance, punctuality and discipline problems, which makes it appear negative to the learners.

53. All learners have portfolios of work but they are often poorly structured and do not reflect their achievements. Learners do not have a sense of ownership of their portfolios, or pride in their presentation.

Good Practice

A visiting film company spent the day at the City Skills project making a video with the learners on aggression and violence. The day started with 10 learners, and by the end of the day there was a strong group of 17 who all played an active part in the production of the video. All learners were actively involved and enjoying what they were doing.