

# REINSPECTION REPORT

## **Strategic Training Solutions (Mansfield) Limited Reinspection**

09 September 2003



ADULT LEARNING  
INSPECTORATE

STRATEGIC TRAINING SOLUTIONS (MANSFIELD) LIMITED REINSPECTION

## Grading

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

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

Inspectors use a five-point scale to summarise their judgements about the quality of provision in occupational/curriculum areas. The same scale is used to describe the quality of leadership and management, which includes quality assurance and equality of opportunity. The descriptors for the five grades are:

- *grade 1 - outstanding*
- *grade 2 - good*
- *grade 3 - satisfactory*
- *grade 4 - unsatisfactory*
- *grade 5 - very weak.*

The two grading scales relate to each other as follows:

SEVEN-POINT SCALE	FIVE-POINT SCALE
grade 1	grade 1
grade 2	
grade 3	grade 2
grade 4	grade 3
grade 5	grade 4
grade 6	grade 5
grade 7	

## Adult Learning Inspectorate

The Adult Learning Inspectorate (ALI) was established under the provisions of the *Learning and Skills Act 2000* to bring the inspection of all aspects of adult learning and work-based learning within the remit of a single inspectorate. The ALI is responsible for inspecting a wide range of government-funded learning, including:

- work-based learning for all people over 16
- provision in further education colleges for people aged 19 and over
- the University for Industry's **learndirect** provision
- Adult and Community Learning
- learning and job preparation programmes funded by Jobcentre Plus
- education and training in prisons, at the invitation of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Prisons.

Inspections are carried out in accordance with the *Common Inspection Framework* by teams of full-time inspectors and part-time associate inspectors who have knowledge of, and experience in, the work which they inspect. All providers are invited to nominate a senior member of their staff to participate in the inspection as a team member.

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## REINSPECTION REPORT

### DESCRIPTION OF THE PROVIDER

1. Strategic Training Solutions (Mansfield) Limited (STS) is a private training provider which was formed in 1998. It is based in Mansfield, Nottinghamshire and provides work-based learning for 161 young people in horticulture, business administration, information and communications technology (ICT), retailing and customer service, and hairdressing. It is funded by Nottinghamshire Learning and Skills Council (LSC). The company is owned and managed by the managing director. STS employs 23 staff, of whom 18 are full time and five are part time. Two of the staff have significant management responsibility for company operations and administration.

### SCOPE OF PROVISION

#### Hairdressing & beauty therapy

2. There are 50 learners in hairdressing, of whom 40 are foundation modern apprentices and 10 are advanced modern apprentices. Learners are recruited through Connexions and by direct referrals from local employers. STS has its own training salon which is located in the centre of Mansfield. Nine learners are currently training at this salon and attend full time. The remaining 41 learners attend the training centre for one day every two weeks for background knowledge sessions, practical training and assessment. The company works with 26 other salons where the learners are employed and receive practical training. STS has a programme manager for hairdressing and employs two full-time and one part-time staff to provide hairdressing training and assessment, in addition to a part-time internal verifier. These are supported by four staff who contribute to key skills training and assessment.

### ABOUT THE REINSPECTION

Number of inspectors	2
Number of inspection days	6
Number of learner interviews	14
Number of staff interviews	7
Number of employer interviews	4
Number of locations/sites/learning centres visited	2

### OVERALL JUDGEMENT

3. STS was previously inspected in September 2002 and leadership and management, equality of opportunity were judged to be satisfactory. Training in horticulture, business administration, ICT, and retailing and customer service were also satisfactory. Hairdressing training and quality assurance arrangements were judged to be unsatisfactory. At the end of the reinspection process the quality of work-based learning

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in hairdressing was found to be satisfactory.

### GRADES

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

	Inspection	Reinspection
<b>Hairdressing &amp; beauty therapy</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>3</b>
Contributory grades:		
Work-based learning for young people	4	3

## AREAS OF LEARNING

### Hairdressing & beauty therapy

Grade 3

Programmes inspected	Number of learners	Contributory grade
Work-based learning for young people	50	3

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

#### Strengths

- effective development of learners' technical skills
- particularly good support for learners

#### Weaknesses

- slow progress towards completion of apprenticeship framework for some learners
- weak background knowledge training

#### Achievement and standards

4. The training programme in hairdressing has been operating for two years and, as yet, there have been few achievements. Retention rates are currently satisfactory. For the most recent year, all 10 starters on the advanced modern apprenticeship are still in training, while on the foundation modern apprenticeship, only 25 out of 37 learners who started remain on programme. There is slow progress towards completion of the apprenticeship framework. Some learners who have been training for a considerable length of time have few completed units. For example, basic units such as shampooing are often not completed until well into the programme. STS is dealing with the problem and learners who have recently joined the programme are showing better progress. There is evidence that satisfactory progress is now being made with the delivery and integration of key skills. Three learners have achieved the full key skills qualification and a further seven portfolios are awaiting external verification. Learners demonstrate a good range of practical skills while working on clients. Learners' portfolios of evidence are generally satisfactory.

#### Quality of education and training

5. STS continues to provide learners with good technical skills, which was identified as a strength at the previous inspection. Training staff demonstrate good product knowledge and practical skills, although there is sometimes insufficient emphasis on health and safety in the commercial salon. Learners progress well with their practical work and enjoy their off-the-job training at the centre. Those who are in the early part of their training use a range of colouring techniques with confidence. Weak background

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knowledge training was identified at the previous inspection and this is still a cause for concern. Some of the information which is given to learners is technically incorrect. Lesson plans do not always reflect the lesson activity, nor do they ensure that subjects are delivered in a clear and logical manner. Learners often waste time copying information from textbooks which is not necessary. Key points to help the learners understand are not sufficiently emphasised and reinforced.

6. Most learners have good on-the-job training and continue to work in good and well-resourced salons which offer a wide range of technical skills. Most employers are committed to supporting their learners and actively seek models for the salon training. Learners who do not have supervised training sessions in their salons attend off-the-job training for the development and assessment of their skills.

7. The training centre is well resourced. There is a well-equipped commercial salon with supervisors who work on clients. Learners are able to carry out work on a range of clients to cover the national vocational qualification (NVQ) requirements. STS is in the process of expanding the learning resources with the purchase of additional textbooks and videos. All members of the hairdressing team have industrial experience and are currently attending a range of external training events in order to develop and update their knowledge and skills.

8. The ongoing development of assessment practices was previously identified as a weakness, but it is now satisfactory. STS has increased the number of assessors and is now able to carry out more assessments in the workplace. Learners now understand the requirements of the NVQ and can identify the units and range, and can more clearly monitor their own progress. STS has recruited an experienced internal verifier who is developing a comprehensive and effective system to monitor assessments and portfolio completion. Further development is planned to increase the number of work-based assessors. An updated monitoring system is displayed in the lecture room for staff's and learners' information.

9. Learners have an initial assessment of their occupational aptitude and an assessment of their additional literacy and numeracy skills support needs, to help ensure that they are placed on the appropriate programme. Some learners remain in the centre full time while developing their interpersonal skills, before entering the workplace.

10. Learners are effectively supported during induction and throughout their training programme. Staff offer good support and guidance to learners to help them overcome difficulties with their training programme and with pastoral care. As identified at the previous inspection there is particularly good specialist support for learners who have additional learning needs and who need literacy and numeracy skills support. The support is carried out with sensitivity and is appreciated and well used by the learners.

11. STS is developing the review process to include specific and achievable targets and to increase employers' involvement. Previously, many comments on the review sheets were vague and did not always relate to the on- and off-the-job activities. Emphasis is now placed on establishing whether previously set targets have been achieved, to help



the learners progress at a faster pace.

### **Leadership and management**

12. Effective developments have taken place to deal with weaknesses identified at the previous inspection. The recruitment of additional staff who have clear lines of accountability has improved the quality of the provision. This is particularly evident with internal verification, where good practice is being shared through regular staff meetings to establish standardisation. There is effective staff development to increase awareness of key skills and vocational standards. Management information is now being used more effectively to inform trainers and set targets for retention and achievement. The previous inspection highlighted that employers were insufficiently involved in the training programmes. Work has been done to involve employers more in the learners' training and to widen the employers' knowledge of the requirements of the NVQ. This has been helped by the production and circulation of an employers' handbook and more involvement in the progress reviews. STS recognises that there is still further work to be done to ensure all employers are actively engaged in the training programme.