

REINSPECTION REPORT

WEBS Training Limited Reinspection

06 November 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. The same scale is used to describe the quality of leadership and management, which includes quality assurance and equality of opportunity. The descriptors for the five grades are:

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

The two grading scales relate to each other as follows:

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

Adult Learning Inspectorate

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

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

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

REINSPECTION REPORT

WEBS Training Limited Reinspection

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REINSPECTION REPORT

DESCRIPTION OF THE PROVIDER

1. WEBS Training Ltd (WEBS) is a private company with a single administrative and training centre based in Beeston, Nottinghamshire. Following a decision to cease a subcontracting arrangement with a local college, all off-the-job training takes place at WEBS's training centre. The company provides furniture manufacturing training leading to national vocational qualifications (NVQs) at level 2 and advanced and foundation modern apprenticeships. Most learners follow either furniture production/wood occupations or upholstery training. A few are in polishing, cutting and sewing.
2. Since the previous inspection, the company has been restructured. WEBS has a board of 13 directors, of whom two have operational management responsibilities. The training director is responsible for the training function, which is carried out by four training officers, a recently appointed co-ordinator for literacy and numeracy and key skills, and a business development co-ordinator who reviews the learners' progress. The administration function and internal verification process is the responsibility of the contracts director who is supported by two administrators.
3. A significant proportion of learners are employed in companies in the Long Eaton area of south Nottinghamshire. Other learners are employed in the geographical area that covers south and west Derbyshire and east Nottinghamshire.

SCOPE OF PROVISION

Engineering, technology & manufacturing

4. There are 90 learners on work-based learning programmes and two adult learners. Of these, 37 are on assembled furniture production programmes, 10 are on hand-crafted furniture programmes, 15 are on wood machining programmes and 30 are on upholstery programmes. Seven are advanced modern apprentices, 83 are foundation modern apprentices and two are employed adults working towards an upholstery NVQ at level 2 as part of a 'valuable skills' programme. All learners are employed with a range of local furniture manufacturing companies. The off-the-job training is now provided on one day a week at the training centre in Beeston. Most assessments are carried out in the workplace by WEBS. Most learners in manufacturing need additional support in literacy and numeracy. All learners are visited in the workplace every 12 weeks for reviews of progress.

ABOUT THE REINSPECTION

Number of inspectors	4
Number of inspection days	14
Number of learner interviews	46
Number of staff interviews	29
Number of employer interviews	20
Number of locations/sites/learning centres visited	1
Number of visits	20

OVERALL JUDGEMENT

5. The previous inspection in September 2002 found all aspects of the provision to be unsatisfactory. At the end of the reinspection process in July and November 2003, all aspects of the provision were found to be satisfactory

GRADES

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

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

	Inspection	Reinspection
Engineering, technology & manufacturing	4	3
Contributory grades:		
Work-based learning for young people	4	3

KEY FINDINGS

Achievement and standards

6. **Learners are developing a broad range of skills.** They gain good experience by being trained on different specialised equipment and machines.

7. **The achievement rates for modern apprentices are poor,** with only 30 per cent completing the framework in 1999-2000. Up until 2002, over half the modern apprentices left the programme early. There are good improvements to retention rates and over three-quarters of all learners who started in 2002-03 are still in learning.

Quality of education and training

Grades awarded to learning sessions

	Grade 1	Grade 2	Grade 3	Grade 4	Grade 5	Grade 6	Grade 7	Total
Engineering, technology & manufacturing	0	0	1	1	0	0	0	2
Total	0	0	1	1	0	0	0	2

8. **WEBS continues to build on the strength of good development of job-related skills.** In smaller companies, learners are given the opportunity to work with all types of products. In the larger upholstery companies, learners are sometimes transferred between different departments to gain a range of experiences.

9. **Off-the-job training is good.** Training officers are very experienced and some are working towards teaching qualifications. In most areas there are well-designed and comprehensive training programmes and schemes of work, which relate to the background knowledge and practical work.

10. **Learners receive good support.** Problems are resolved quickly and successfully. When necessary, alternative employment is found. There is good support for learners from the training officers. Some companies have developed a mentoring system using experienced staff to coach learners.

11. **WEBS has developed an effective approach to working with employers.** Training officers discuss and agree with employers the tasks that learners will complete. Employers have a good understanding of what learners will be doing at the training centre and when they will learn specific techniques.

12. **Learners on upholstery programmes are making slow progress towards the achievement of their NVQ.** Half of the upholstery learners have exceeded their planned end dates.

13. **Some of the targets set during the progress reviews are not detailed and are not specific enough.** There is insufficient information on the activities or types of evidence learners need to collect to achieve their NVQ and key skills.

Leadership and management

14. **WEBS has strong and well-established links with external organisations.** WEBS works closely with a nationally recognised furniture training organisation; a partnership with a local training provider and membership of a provider network have been used to develop good training practice. Training officers regularly contact prospective employers, as well as those that offer work placements.

15. **WEBS has good internal communications.** Since the previous inspection, WEBS has

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been restructured and staff are well informed about new plans, short- and long-term goals and the activities that must take place to achieve them.

16. **There are particularly good resources for training.** All off-the-job training now takes place at WEBS's training centre in good training workshops for wood occupations and upholstery. Learners have access to a wider range of materials and new industry standard equipment.

17. **The support to develop learners' skills in literacy, numeracy and language is now effective.** All learners have an appropriate initial assessment, and support is available in separate individual sessions or during the background knowledge sessions. Learners value the support they receive.

18. **There is an effective system to collect data and check its accuracy.** Regular reports are now produced and evaluated and appropriate action is taken. Overall retention and achievement rates are regularly monitored. No targets have been set for different qualifications.

19. **Learners have a good understanding of equality of opportunity.** They can effectively recall the induction process and have a good understanding of their rights and responsibilities. WEBS is responsive to learners' concerns about how they are being treated in the workplace and resolve problems in a timely and effective manner.

20. Although effective action has been taken to improve learners' retention rates, **the achievement rates for modern apprentices remain poor.**

21. An action plan has been produced which relates to targeting under-represented groups, but activities have taken considerably longer to complete than anticipated. The inadequate targeting was highlighted in the previous inspection.

22. **WEBS has a highly effective appraisal system.** Appraisal objectives and performance are clearly linked to the business plan. Issues identified as part of the monitoring of the quality assurance procedures are considered at staff appraisals, and where appropriate, training activity takes place. Staff find the appraisal system helpful.

23. The internal verification system covers all aspects of internal verification, and there is an effective monitoring system. However, the verifier who observes the assessments is not vocationally competent and does not fulfil the requirements of the assessment and verification strategy.

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

Leadership and management

Strengths

- strong links with external organisations

- good internal communications
- particularly good resources for training
- good understanding of equality of opportunity by learners
- very effective appraisal system

Weaknesses

- low rates of achievement of frameworks by modern apprentices
- slow progress in targeting under-represented groups
- inappropriate occupational competence for internal verification

Engineering, technology & manufacturing

Strengths

- particularly good development of job-related skills
- good off-the-job training
- good support for learners

Weaknesses

- poor completion rates for modern apprentices
- slow progress on upholstery qualifications
- some insufficiently individualised target-setting

DETAILED REINSPECTION FINDINGS

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

Grade 3

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

Strengths

- strong links with external organisations
- good internal communications
- particularly good resources for training
- good understanding of equality of opportunity by learners
- very effective appraisal system

Weaknesses

- low rates of achievement of frameworks by modern apprentices
- slow progress in targeting under-represented groups
- inappropriate occupational competence for internal verification

24. WEBS has strong and well-established links with external organisations. This was identified at the previous inspection. WEBS works closely with a nationally recognised furniture training organisation whose national headquarters are in Beeston. Through this link, WEBS has been active in a number of projects including the development of the technical certificates for the furniture industry, foundation management distance learning material and production of an interactive CD-ROM for schools that promotes the furniture industry. Feedback from learners has been used to influence the language used in frameworks. A partnership with a local training provider, that has obtained recent good inspection grades, and membership of a provider network has been used to develop good training practice. Training officers regularly contact prospective employers as well as those that offer work placements.

25. WEBS has good internal communications. Managers have worked hard to build on this strength that was partially identified in the previous inspection report. Since the previous inspection, WEBS has been restructured and staff have a good understanding of the new structure and their roles and responsibilities within it. The operational management style is open and consultative. Staff are well informed about WEBS's current plans, short- and long-term goals and the activities that must be carried out to achieve them. There is a structured timetable of meetings with set agenda items that include equality of opportunity and health and safety. Staff and director meetings are generally held each week with good sharing of minutes. Board meetings are held quarterly, and while the minutes of the meeting are confidential, all staff are kept updated on relevant discussions. Action to resolve problems is clearly recorded, but not always time bound. Meetings are effectively used to share good practice and to ensure

effective planning and management of training. To further develop team communication, staff meetings take place at an external venue where training issues are considered. Staff know the learners very well and encourage them to speak out when they have concerns. Issues are dealt with quickly and appropriately. At all levels of the organisation, staff are encouraged to communicate electronically and through personal contact.

26. The resources are particularly good. All off-the-job training now takes place at WEBS's training centre. Since the previous inspection, WEBS has carried out a considerable amount of work to establish good training workshops for wood occupations and upholstery. Learners now have access to a wider range of good materials and new industry standard equipment has been bought. The main information technology (IT) training room is well equipped and contains good computer software. Learners are able to use industry standard software and have good access to the internet to help their research.

27. A board of directors monitors WEBS financial position closely and has attempted to identify additional funds to increase the resources. The board has been successful in obtaining donations of upholstery materials from employers. Overall, there has been a major increase in the resources to support upholstery training. WEBS has purchased equipment for wood occupations using its own funds. The quality of employers' equipment for on-the-job training is good for wood occupations and satisfactory or better for upholstery.

28. Action taken to improve learners' retention rates has been successful. The support available to develop learners' skills in literacy, numeracy and language are now effective. When appropriate, learners receive key skills support, and this rectifies a weakness identified at the previous inspection. Over half the learners are currently receiving training in literacy and/or numeracy. A strategy for literacy, numeracy and language support for 2003-06 has recently been introduced. All learners now receive an appropriate initial assessment. Support is provided in individual sessions or during the background knowledge sessions. Learners value the support they receive. Learners who have dyslexia receive effective support from WEBS's staff, as well as, in one company, through a mentor system. Learners who have problems with written work are allowed to produce a paper-free portfolio using video, audio and pictorial evidence that is cross-referenced to the NVQ. Learners are reviewed each week.

29. Action taken to increase the number of modern apprentices who complete the framework has proved less successful and achievement rates remain poor. WEBS has recently recognised the need to implement more effective processes to inform trainers of learners' progress. It is too early to make a judgement on this development. An appropriately qualified full-time trainer has very recently been appointed to replace a trainer who was employed part-time.

30. Since the previous inspection, much work has been carried out to improve the collection and use of data. Owing to problems with the previous data collection process, reliable data are only available from February 2003. A well-maintained database

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is now used to record a range of data on learners. A member of WEBS's staff has sole responsibility for maintaining the database and there is an effective system to check the accuracy of data. WEBS is continuing to develop the use of data as a management tool and recognises the benefit of carrying out trend analysis. Regular reports are now produced and evaluated and appropriate action is taken. For example, data are used to effectively monitor the learners' attendance and to target staffing resources. Data reports are discussed at monthly director meetings and weekly staff meetings. The overall retention and achievement rates of the organisation have been established as part of the reinspection process and regular monitoring against these targets takes place. These data have not been used to set targets for different qualifications.

Equality of opportunity

Contributory grade 3

31. A director has overall responsibility for equality of opportunity. WEBS has a clear policy on equal opportunities and diversity. A comprehensive range of procedures and codes of practice is in place to support the implementation of the policy which includes dealing with bullying, harassment and discrimination. Equality of opportunity is a standing agenda item at staff meetings.

32. Learners have a good understanding of equality of opportunity and are able to discuss issues and situations that arise during their training. All learners are provided with information at induction which includes harassment and complaints and they also watch a video that deals with prejudice. Learners are encouraged to discuss and reflect on their own experiences of equal opportunities. They can effectively recall the induction process and have a good understanding of their rights and responsibilities and how the law protects them. Monitoring of equality of opportunity in the workplace takes place at regular progress reviews. At the previous inspection, it was noted that learners' understanding of equality of opportunity was not developed at progress reviews. Very recently the recording of this process has been enhanced by the introduction of new documents. These include questions designed to promote and reinforce learners' understanding of equality of opportunity, for which training by an external consultant has been carried out. Currently, half the learners have received training through this initiative.

33. Learners are aware of the formal and informal methods of expressing a complaint or grievance. WEBS is responsive to learners' concerns about how they are being treated in the workplace. Staff visit learners and try to resolve problems and record the action taken in the learners' files. When complaints have been received, they are dealt with effectively. Some staff have recently been trained in equality of opportunity and most have attended community visits to raise their awareness of equality and diversity.

34. Equality of opportunity is part of the action plan which was drawn up in response to the previous inspection. This action plan is regularly monitored, but actions relating to the targeting of under-represented groups have taken considerably longer to complete than anticipated. The inadequate targeting was highlighted in the previous inspection. Until recently there was no specific promotion to under-represented groups. A promotion pack containing non-stereotypical images of learners has very recently been

distributed to employers, Connexions and schools. A quarterly newsletter has also been distributed recently. A well-attended seminar for employers has also taken place to raise their awareness of a range of issues, including equality of opportunity in training and employment. The business plan requires a marketing plan to be produced, but this is only a recent development. Targets have been set to increase the proportion of learners who have a disability and those who are from minority ethnic groups. No targets for recruitment of women have been set. In June 2003, an analysis of data for all applicants during the period January to September 2002 was carried out. The report recognised the poor number of women, disabled and minority ethnic applicants. A postcode analysis has recently been carried out and it has identified geographical areas to target under-represented groups. It is too early to make any comment on the impact of proposed actions as a result of this analysis. WEBS's staff attend careers conventions and encourage learners to consider joining work-based learning programmes. In addition, they carry out mock interview and taster sessions for young people. None of this activity is part of a strategy to target under-represented groups. Recently, WEBS has started a project with a workshop that employs learners who have a disability. However, it is too early to make a judgement on the impact of this initiative. Currently only two of the 92 learners are from minority ethnic groups, five have a disability and two are women.

35. As recognised in the most recent self-assessment report, the main IT training room and one part of the upholstery workshop has poor access for learners with restricted mobility. Suitable alternative arrangements are available for learners who need to use the facilities in these rooms.

Quality assurance

Contributory grade 3

36. A director has overall responsibility for quality assurance. A wide range of quality assurance policies and procedures is held in the system manual and associated control document file. These files have recently been reviewed and updated. For example, a process has now been introduced which ensures all the learners' targets are recorded on a form which is kept in the learners' file. Recently, observation of off-the-job training has been introduced. However, there is no systematic plan of observations to ensure all aspects of teaching and learning are observed. Documents are clearly written and effective regular auditing is carried out. For example, employer and learner files are audited each month to ensure procedural compliance. Quality assurance is covered at staff induction and all staff have their own copy of the quality assurance manual. The outcome of the quality assurance process is considered at staff meetings where quality assurance, standardisation and sharing of good practice are standing agenda items. In addition to these weekly meetings staff hold standardisation meetings on aspects of the procedures linked to the delivery of learning programmes, such as assessment and individual learning plans. WEBS makes satisfactory use of feedback from employers and learners as a basis for improvements to the training.

37. WEBS has a highly effective appraisal system where staff are appraised on a six-monthly basis. The appraisal system methodically reviews progress towards targets set at the last appraisal. Objectives and performance for the coming period are clearly linked to targets identified by the organisation in the business plan. Issues identified as part of

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the monitoring of the quality assurance procedures are taken forward to the staff appraisals and, where appropriate, training takes place. For example, three of the training officers were sent on a two-day residential training programme focusing on retention and achievement rates as part of a strategy to improve this aspect of the training process. Staff are actively encouraged to give feedback about the organisation and their line managers as part of the appraisal process. Staff find the appraisal system helpful.

38. The internal verification system covers all aspects of internal verification. There is also an effective monitoring system which ensures that learners' achievements are monitored. There are three internal verifiers, one of whom is the internal verification co-ordinator and manages the verification and assessment systems. One of the other verifiers is working towards the verifier award. The verifier who is carrying out the observation of assessment practice is not vocationally competent and does not fulfil the requirements of the assessment and verification strategy.

39. Staff at all levels of the organisation were effectively involved in the development of the current self-assessment report. The strengths and weaknesses identified by inspectors matched many of those in the self-assessment report, although a number of other strengths and weaknesses were identified.

AREAS OF LEARNING

Engineering, technology & manufacturing

Grade 3

Programmes inspected	Number of learners	Contributory grade
Work-based learning for young people	90	3

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

Strengths

- particularly good development of job-related skills
- good off-the-job training
- good support for learners

Weaknesses

- poor completion rates for modern apprentices
- slow progress on upholstery qualifications
- some insufficiently individualised target-setting

Achievement and standards

40. Learners gain good experience from a wide range of opportunities at work. Several learners are achieving good industry standards early in their training programme. For example, in some companies learners are building good bedroom furniture and leather upholstered products, while others are given opportunities for fixing and fitting on sites. These learners are developing a broad range of skills by being trained on different specialised equipment and machines. Some employers offer learners bonuses for completing good work on time. Learners are motivated by this incentive and it helps them to build their confidence. WEBS sponsors learners to attend an outdoor activity course to help them develop good interpersonal skills, team-building and confidence. This is used to support the key skills.

41. Following the previous inspection, significant progress has been made on introducing upholstery learners to key skills training early in their programme. In the months before the final reinspection visit, 24 had gained their application of number, communications and IT qualifications. At the previous inspection, none of the learners had completed the foundation modern apprenticeship framework. In the past year, 17 of the 94 learners who started between 1999 and 2001 have completed the framework and 27 are still in learning. The current achievement rates for advanced modern apprentices are poor at only 30 per cent for 1999-2000. Up until 2002, over half the modern apprentices left the programme early. There are good improvements to retention rates and over three-quarters of all learners who started in 2002-03 are still in

learning.

Quality of education and training

42. WEBS continues to build on the strength of good development of job-related skills from the previous inspection. Learners are employed by a good range of local companies which produce a wide variety of products. In smaller companies, learners are given the opportunity to work with all types of products and to learn a broad range of skills. In larger upholstery companies, learners are often transferred between different departments to gain a range of experiences. Some learners, once they have gained the appropriate experience on machines, train the less experienced learners.

43. Off-the-job training continues to be good and has been very effectively developed since the previous inspection. A well-resourced wood machining workshop has been established at WEBS's training centre. All training officers are very experienced in the occupational areas and some are working towards teaching qualifications. All equipment and machinery are of good industry standard. The range of materials is good and employers often provide materials for learners to practise on. The training is well planned, with the wood occupations learners producing frames for the upholstery learners to finish. In most areas there are well-designed and comprehensive training programmes and schemes of work, which relate the background knowledge and practical work. There are currently no training exercises or activities to develop learners' sewing skills. Learners have good access to computers.

44. There is good support for learners when they apply to WEBS. All learners are interviewed to identify suitable employers. Most learners find employment quickly and some are employed before they start. Employers give learners good support and training to develop their skills which allow them to achieve their qualifications. Learners who are not happy with their employer, feel able to discuss the issues with their trainer. Problems are resolved quickly and successfully and when necessary, alternative employment is found. There is good support for learners from the training officers when they visit the workplace and during the weekly visit to the training centre. Some companies have developed an effective mentoring system.

45. WEBS has developed an effective approach to working with employers. Employers have a good understanding of what learners will be doing at the training centre and when they will learn specific techniques. This sharing of information gives the employers a sound understanding of the training programme so they can effectively support their learners. In upholstery, the new NVQ standards have only recently been matched to assignments and work-based tasks. Learners and employers have a good understanding of the assignments and work-based tasks, but are unaware how these relate to the units of the NVQ.

46. Many learners need and receive effective training in literacy, numeracy and key skills. A new tutor has been appointed to give appropriate support to learners on an individual basis and during group workshops. Learners who have dyslexia receive

satisfactory support at WEBS and at the workplace.

47. The poor assessment practices in upholstery which were identified at the previous inspection have been resolved. Good use is now made of detailed observations, with digital pictures, clear descriptions and details of questioning. Assessors also make good use of a paper-free portfolio using video, audio and pictorial evidence. Learners on upholstery programmes are making slow progress toward achievement of their NVQ. Half the current upholstery learners have exceeded their planned end dates. Some have only been observed in the workplace a few times. A few learners have not had all the work in their logbooks assessed. The three learners who are starting the second year of their programme have only been observed once and have not completed any units. Although learners can request assessment visits on dates other than those planned, most do not understand the NVQ and assessment process well enough to ask for assessment when they feel they are competent. Feedback on assessment decisions is sometimes not clear and does not specify what learners need to do next.

48. A newly established progress review process is carried out by the business development co-ordinator. Effective consultation with the training staff takes place before the review, but some of the targets set during the review are not detailed and are not specific enough to ensure the learners progress effectively. There is insufficient information on the activities or types of evidence learners need to collect to achieve their NVQ and key skills.

Leadership and management

49. Staff at WEBS work closely to ensure effective management of training and the sharing of good practice. The very effective paper-free portfolio developed in wood occupations has been used to ensure learners who are not assessed for a long time can progress more quickly and achieve the NVQ. Training officers are well supported and are encouraged to gain additional qualifications to enable them to support the learners more effectively.

50. The training officers are working effectively with employers. Employers and WEBS discuss and agree the tasks that learners will carry out in the workplace. WEBS ensures employers are aware of what training will take place during the off-the-job training by sharing the programme plan with them. Employers and training officers are starting to co-ordinate the on- and off-the-job training more effectively. New monitoring systems have been developed to set targets and to check learners' progress through the assignments and activities related to the qualification and framework. These are clearly displayed in the training centre for the manager, training officers and learners to refer to.

51. Learners have a good understanding of equal opportunities which is introduced at induction. Some learners have also attended an additional training session run by a consultant. Equal opportunities is now being effectively discussed at regular progress reviews.

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52. Internal verification processes are not always used effectively to ensure that learners' work is assessed on a regular basis. In some cases learners' work has not been assessed for long periods.