

# REINSPECTION REPORT

## **Aigburth Training Opportunities Reinspection**

**17 March 2004**



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**

## **Aigburth Training Opportunities Reinspection**

### **Contents**

#### **Summary**

Description of the provider	1
Scope of provision	1
About the reinspection	2
Overall judgement	2
Grades	2
Key findings	3

#### **Detailed reinspection findings**

Leadership and management	7
Equality of opportunity	9
Quality assurance	10
Business administration, management & professional	12
Health, social care & public services	16

## REINSPECTION REPORT

### DESCRIPTION OF THE PROVIDER

1. Aigburth Training Opportunities (ATO) is a company limited by guarantee, with charitable status. Established in 1978, ATO has one main site, in Liverpool city centre. It provides work-based learning for 55 young people; 10 are in business administration, and 45 are in early years care and education.

2. ATO employs a training centre manager and eight other staff. The centre manager is responsible for centre operations and strategic and operational planning. The other staff comprise a part-time senior internal verifier, a part-time lead internal verifier, two part-time assessors, two tutors, an administrator and an administration assistant. Most staff have been appointed since the previous inspection. A further four work-based assessors are employed by work-placement providers. ATO has a board of five volunteer directors, it funds its training provision through Greater Merseyside Learning and Skills Council.

### SCOPE OF PROVISION

#### **Business administration, management & professional**

3. Aigburth Training has 10 foundation and advanced modern apprentices in business administration; one is an advanced modern apprentice and nine are foundation modern apprentices. Three learners are identified as having additional learning or social needs but none have other disclosed disabilities. Three learners are employed, six are in work placements and one is waiting for a placement. Learners are recruited by referrals from Connexions, careers advisers and directly from employers. Learners can start at any time of the year. The recruitment process includes initial assessments based on key skills testing and interviews. All employed and placed learners have individual inductions at their workplaces and non-placed learners attend the training centre on a full-time basis. Induction includes an explanation of the modern apprenticeship framework, equal opportunities awareness training and employment skills development. After induction, learners who are in work placements attend the training centre for one or two days each week and work towards key skills qualifications and the technical certificate qualification. Employed and placed learners receive off-the-job training in the workplace. The assessors visit learners in the workplace each month to carry out workplace assessments, action-planning, portfolio reviews and individual coaching. Progress reviews are carried out every 12 weeks. ATO has one administration assessor, an internal verifier and an off-the-job trainer. All staff are part time and report to the training centre manager.

## Health, social care & public services

4. ATO provides foundation and advanced modern apprenticeships in early years care and education. There are 26 foundation modern apprentices and 19 advanced modern apprentices. Recruitment and selection is by completion of a literacy, numeracy, language and key skills test paper, assessment of attitude to work, evidence of good school attendance and interview. Currently, ATO has 25 workplace providers and a few learners are placed in schools. Learners are assured of work experience with children up to seven years of age. Most advanced modern apprentices are employed and most foundation modern apprentices are in work placements. All learners attend ATO for one full day each week for background knowledge, key skills and additional learning and portfolio support. Learners are visited in their work placements once or twice each month for assessment and monitoring. Tutorials are held once a month at which time the learner's progress is reviewed.

## ABOUT THE REINSPECTION

Number of inspectors	4
Number of inspection days	15
Number of learner interviews	19
Number of staff interviews	25
Number of employer interviews	8
Number of locations/sites/learning centres visited	9
Number of partner/external agency interviews	4
Number of visits	23

## OVERALL JUDGEMENT

5. At ATO's previous inspection in November 2002, its arrangements for equality of opportunity and the quality of work-based learning in business administration were satisfactory. Its leadership and management, arrangements for quality assurance and the quality of work-based learning in early years care and education were unsatisfactory. At the end of the reinspection process all aspects of leadership and management and work-based learning were found to be satisfactory.

## GRADES

Grades awarded at previous inspection

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

<b>Leadership and management</b>	<b>4</b>
Contributory grades:	
Equality of opportunity	3
Quality assurance	4

## AIGBURTH TRAINING OPPORTUNITIES REINSPECTION

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

Health, social care & public services	4
Contributory grades:	
Work-based learning for young people	4

### Grades awarded at reinspection

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

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

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

Health, social care & public services	3
Contributory grades:	
Work-based learning for young people	3

## KEY FINDINGS

### Achievement and standards

6. Retention rates for advanced modern apprentices in early years care and education, and foundation modern apprentices in business administration have improved since the previous inspection. In early years, retention is now good at 86 per cent. **In business administration retention rates are still low**, at 50 per cent for foundation modern apprentices, but have improved since the previous inspection's figure of 4.8 per cent. **The retention rate for foundation modern apprentices in early years care and education is declining.** Between 2001-02, retention was good at 78 per cent. It fell by 33 per cent in 2002-03 and almost 33 per cent of learners who started in 2003-04 have left the programme.

7. **Some early years care and education learners make slow progress.** Thirteen per cent of learners remain after their planned programme end date, and just over 50 per cent of foundation modern apprentices who started in 2003-04 are still in training. **Achievement rates in business administration remain low**, but most of the low achievers have now left

the programme. Current business administration learners are making satisfactory progress. They have been on programme for eight months. They have all completed between three and five units, and are putting together substantial key skills folders which contain good-quality evidence.

**8. Learners' achievement of key skills qualifications in business administration programmes have increased,** and many learners have been successful in passing key skills tests in application of number and communication. **However, in early years care and education, key skills training is not well established.** Although approximately 65 per cent of early years learners achieve their national vocational qualifications (NVQs), few achieve their key skills qualifications.

### Quality of education and training

9. Business administration learners make very good progress in key skills. Most business administration learners are given full-time training at ATO's training centre. New, clearly written key skills learning materials have been designed and successfully introduced in business administration. Learners have individually designed programmes which take into account their abilities, interests and strengths. In early years care and education, on and off-the-job training is satisfactory. **Very effective communications with employers create good workplace learning experiences.** Many improvements have been made to the quality of the links between on- and off-the-job training.

10. Resources are satisfactory in early years care and education. The training room is light and well ventilated; there are good written resources and learning materials to reinforce understanding of child development, care and education. **However, in business administration, there is not enough specialist equipment to support learning and assessment.** Some computers need updating, and insufficient use is made of interactive CD-ROMs. ATO has no portable recording equipment to enhance training and assessment in the workplace.

**11. The assessment and monitoring of learners' progress has improved since the previous inspection.** Learners in both areas of learning are set good, clearly written targets which are regularly monitored. In business administration, the more able and enthusiastic learners can progress more quickly by requesting new targets more frequently. Assessments in early years care and education are well-planned and learners receive detailed feedback. **Internal verification is particularly comprehensive in business administration.** The sampling of completed and part-completed units is planned, and supplemented by random selection. Internal verification in early years care and education is sound.

**12. The range of programmes in business administration is not appropriate for some learners.** A number of learners have additional difficulties, such as poor school attendance patterns, or behavioural difficulties. They find it difficult to sustain key



employability requirements. There is no alternative training provision at ATO, whose attempts to persuade learners to change to more appropriate provision with a different training provider have been unsuccessful.

**13. Learners in business administration are particularly well supported.** They are well known individually to staff and receive good pastoral support and advice when required. Support is satisfactory for early years care and education learners. Learners are visited frequently in the workplace by ATO and all off-the-job training takes place within a supportive environment.

### Leadership and management

14. Operational leadership and management has improved since the previous inspection. A business plan now sets clear targets. ATO has a number of good policies and procedures, where few originally existed. Some are beginning to have an effect. Strategies to monitor retention and achievement rates are beginning to affect retention, and the key skills strategy has improved the business administration programme in particular. Good communications have been maintained. Staff have regular meetings and are aware of key developments within the organisation. Staff appraisals and development have improved and they are now good. All staff have clear development targets linked to their job profiles.

15. Quality assurance policies and procedures are comprehensive, but not yet established. **The quality assurance of employer training in the business administration programme is weak.** Any approach to employer training is unplanned and employers are not involved in identifying action points. ATO does not check sufficiently on training in the workplace or record training effectively.

16. The detailed policy and procedures for equality of opportunity have been maintained, but the provider has not made sufficient progress in resolving the weakness of physical access to the training centre. However, all workplaces used are compliant with the Disability Discrimination Act 1995, or working towards compliance. The board of directors meets regularly and receives detailed reports about all aspects of training, but is not sufficiently involved in the development of strategy.

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

### Leadership and management

#### Strengths

- particularly good progress in operational management
- good internal communication
- good staff appraisal and development
- comprehensive range of quality assurance policies and procedures

## AIGBURTH TRAINING OPPORTUNITIES REINSPECTION

- detailed equality of opportunities policies and procedures

### **Weaknesses**

- insufficient involvement of board of directors in strategic planning
- insufficiently established quality assurance
- no training centre access for people with mobility problems

## **Business administration, management & professional**

### **Strengths**

- very good development of key skills training
- good short-term targets
- particularly effective support for learners
- very comprehensive internal verification

### **Weaknesses**

- low achievement and retention rates
- insufficient specialist resources
- inappropriate programmes for some learners
- weak quality assurance of employer training

## **Health, social care & public services**

### **Strengths**

- good retention rates for advanced modern apprentices
- good communication with work placements
- good assessment and monitoring of learners' progress

### **Weaknesses**

- some slow progress by learners
- declining retention rate of foundation modern apprentices
- insufficiently established key skills training

## DETAILED REINSPECTION FINDINGS

### LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

**Grade 3**

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

#### **Strengths**

- particularly good progress in operational management
- good internal communication
- good staff appraisal and development
- comprehensive range of quality assurance policies and procedures
- detailed equality of opportunities policies and procedures

#### **Weaknesses**

- insufficient involvement of board of directors in strategic planning
- insufficiently established quality assurance
- no training centre access for people with mobility problems

17. ATO has adopted a responsive and active approach to improving the quality of its provision in a short space of time. The new training centre manager has made good progress with a range of operational and strategic management activities. The three-year business plan is now in place with a planned cycle for review and updates. This is beginning to affect programme management and development; for example, clear targets are now set and monitored. A strategic decision has been made to focus on early years care and education and wind down the provision in business administration. The management of teaching and learning shows improvement. Regular observations of off-the-job training now take place and retention and achievement rates are monitored systematically. A 'traffic light' system is in place to identify learners who are at risk of falling behind with targets, or leaving the programme early. Learners who are identified as 'amber' are considered to be risk, and given additional support and guidance. Many detailed strategies, policies and procedures are now in place where few previously existed. Strategies are mostly well thought out and appropriate. However, the recruitment policy does not include any board representation on staffing interview panels. Some strategies are beginning to have an effect, and some are too recent to be able to form judgements. The introduction of a quarterly financial health check by an external accountant is to begin at the start of the new financial year.

18. Management resources have been reduced since the previous inspection. There is now just one person with management responsibilities, and there are no deputising arrangements. Most staff have been recently appointed and currently do not have sufficient experience for delegated responsibility.

## AIGBURTH TRAINING OPPORTUNITIES REINSPECTION

19. Good internal communications have been maintained since the previous inspection. ATO uses a wide range of channels of communication, including formal, informal, organisational and occupationally specific meetings. All staff now have e-mail facilities. The management style is open and approachable, and there are regular meetings for staff and the board of governors. Record-keeping is detailed and mostly appropriate for the different status of meetings. Action points are routinely followed up, and staff are generally kept well informed about key developments. Staff are valued as individuals and good communication ensures that they are all aware of wider organisational and personal issues that may affect their work.

20. Staff appraisals and development are good. The staff appraisal procedure has been revised and improved. All staff have current role profiles that set clear, job-specific and generic competences. The detailed appraisal policy and process is based on identified competences, and establishes personal and corporate responsibility for staff development. Staff now have clear, set targets for development that are prioritised in relation to their role profile. Development has included key skills integration, assessment strategies and setting targets for learners. Staff maintain continuing professional development files as working documents. All teaching and administration staff, except one who is still on probation, have been appraised; most have had one review. However, there is no overall annual staff development plan, and staff development links to the business plan are not explicitly stated.

21. The management of literacy, numeracy and language support is satisfactory. All learners have initial and diagnostic assessments of literacy and numeracy skills and the results are incorporated into individual learning plans. Appropriate individual learning support is allocated on the basis of the results. The provider has a policy of not recruiting learners who are assessed as below entry level 3. There is specialist assessment for dyslexia. Appropriate learning materials for most learners are available but these are not suitable for learners with specific learning needs. A detailed key skills strategy is supported by a well-planned schedule for group and individual learning. The strategy has been particularly effective in business administration, but is not yet established in early years, care and education. The written additional support strategy is not detailed enough. The additional support tutor has not yet completed qualifications for key skills, literacy or numeracy.

22. A good deal of management information is now collected and used. The use of data is evident in business planning, the self-assessment report and in target-setting and monitoring. Retention and achievement data are monitored monthly and reported to the board of directors. However, the software used cannot always produce reports to the level of detail required. Some inaccurate data, as a result of human error during manual data analysis, were identified during the reinspection.

23. ATO has no subcontracted provision, but contract arrangements with workplace providers are satisfactory. A workplace training agreement sets out key requirements, and is renewed each year. ATO has regular contact with employers, and communications with employers are very effective in early years care and education, but are less consistent in business administration.

24. The board of directors is well established and expresses high levels of support for ATO. However, the board has found it increasingly difficult to meet the changing demands of providing training provision. The board of directors is the only part of ATO that has not been involved in development activities, until very recently. The board meets quarterly and receives detailed reports from the manager about all aspects of the training provision. The minutes of the meeting do not indicate sufficient in-depth discussion about, for example, the achievement of targets, or the development of strategy. The board is not actively involved in the development of strategy or self-assessment. It is not clear whether the board have monitored progress on the post-inspection action plan or development plans other than through comments about the ALI's progress reports. Financial monitoring is the main focus of many meetings. There are no arrangements for appraisal of, or by, the board. The centre manager has not been appraised by a member of the board. Management review meetings have been introduced recently, but these do not focus on the manager's development and support needs. The board of directors is not identified in the organisational plan.

### **Equality of opportunity**

### **Contributory grade 3**

25. ATO has maintained the detailed approach to equal opportunities policies and procedures recognised at the previous inspection. Policies and procedures cover and are fully implemented in many areas, including, bullying, harassment, drugs, sexism and racism. Any equality of opportunity issues are recorded and promptly dealt with. Since the previous inspection, there has been further equality of opportunity staff training and development. The training centre manager is responsible for the promotion of equality of opportunity within ATO.

26. Staff and learners' inductions include equality of opportunity and it forms part of the staff appraisal system and the learners' progress review process. Equal opportunities is a standard agenda item for all meetings within the organisation. Where learners have been identified as having a social or learning need, ATO's staff respond with pastoral support. For example, a young learner has been helped to find childcare for her baby, to enable her to continue her programme. Pen pictures of each learner identify development of lifelong learning skills such as increased confidence, motivation and general employment skills that help with progression into employment. ATO refers learners to a wide range of specialist support agencies to help with social issues affecting learning, including health, housing and finance.

27. ATO's learning materials to promote equality of opportunity are appropriate and there are reminders around the training centre highlighting some of the specific policies, including the promotion of a bully-free zone and respect and dignity for others. Learners are aware of their rights and responsibilities. There is a complaints procedure for learners and staff and appropriate action is taken on receipt of a complaint. There has been only one recorded incident since the previous inspection, which was resolved.

28. ATO now sets recruitment targets for minority ethnicity groups and gender. Recruitment is monitored monthly and data are used to show recruitment trends. Fifty

## AIGBURTH TRAINING OPPORTUNITIES REINSPECTION

per cent of all learners in business administration are men, but in early years care and education, the current learner intake is all women. Some specific marketing materials have been developed to help recruit more men, and plans are being made to target recruitment at minority ethnic groups.

29. Satisfactory links with employers ensure that they have current equal opportunities policies. Work placements are selected for the learners to ensure that they have the best opportunity to progress and succeed at their own pace, in an environment in which they feel comfortable. Learners are visited in the workplace and the use of a set of standard questions checks learners' understanding of equal opportunities as part of the progress review process. Learners in early years care and education have a clear understanding of equal of opportunity as it affects them as learners. They can apply this understanding of equality of opportunity to their work with parents and children. In business administration, some learners are not sufficiently challenged in their responses to equal opportunities questions.

30. The ATO training centre does not have facilities for learners or staff with mobility problems. This weakness was identified in the previous inspection report. Some progress has been made through initial contact with the landlord of the building and a planned visit by a surveyor. ATO has made arrangements for a work-based facility to be made available for learners with restricted mobility. Employers used by ATO are compliant with, or responding to the Disability Discrimination Act 1995. There is no champion on the board actively promoting equality of opportunity; the mission statement of the charity does not include any reference to equality of opportunity.

### Quality assurance

### Contributory grade 3

31. ATO has a comprehensive range of quality assurance policies and procedures for each stage of the learning process. Awareness of quality assurance arrangements, forms part of staff induction and each member of staff has a copy of the quality assurance statement.

32. Since the previous inspection, there has been an ongoing review of the policies by the training centre manager and a greater emphasis on target-setting within the organisation. The positive impact of these actions is beginning to emerge, but it is too early to judge sustained improvement trends. There has been a considerable number of staff changes since the previous inspection and staff development has been carried out to ensure that all operational staff are aware of the need to assure quality and the impact that this has on the individual learner and the organisation. A planned schedule of internal audits monitors different aspects of the organisation, including induction, initial assessment and on- and off-the-job training.

33. Learners' views are sought regularly through questionnaires and evaluations, and the feedback is used to help plan changes. For example, the length and structure of the induction process has been changed recently following learner feedback identifying that it was too long.

34. Assessment and internal verification processes are at least satisfactory; in business administration they are very good. ATO has responded to issues raised through external verification reports. The moderation of key skills portfolio evidence is being improved.

35. ATO now conducts regular observations of off-the-job training, using clear criteria for grading. Staff receive detailed, developmental feedback. However, it is not clear that any resulting improvements are subsequently reviewed. Observations of on-the-job workplace training have begun recently, but the criteria used are vague. Record-keeping for these observations records the learning taking place, but does not record development points for the supervisor, or employer giving the training. It is not clear if verbal feedback is given.

36. The self-assessment process and structure of the report have improved since the previous inspection. The process is co-ordinated by the current training centre manager. Staff were involved in a series of meetings to examine the key strengths, weaknesses and key challenges identified in the inspection report. Some assistance was provided by outside agencies. ATO now has a clear self-assessment cycle, and the report associates more closely with the 'Common Inspection Framework'. A considerable number of staffing changes took place during the initial stages of the most recent self-assessment. Current staff have been involved in the process, but to a limited extent. The board received copies of the latest self-assessment report and the recent update, but have not assessed their own effectiveness. The self-assessment report identified some strengths and weaknesses that matched inspectors' findings, but it is too aspirational and not evaluative enough. It does not assess sufficiently how far ATO has progressed since the previous inspection and where there is still need for improvement.



## AREAS OF LEARNING

### Business administration, management & professional

Grade 3

Programmes inspected	Number of learners	Contributory grade
Work-based learning for young people	10	3

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

#### Strengths

- very good development of key skills training
- good short-term targets
- particularly effective support for learners
- very comprehensive internal verification

#### Weaknesses

- low achievement and retention rates
- insufficient specialist resources
- inappropriate programmes for some learners
- weak quality assurance of employer training

### Achievement and standards

37. Effective action by ATO has increased key skills achievements. This was partly identified in the previous inspection, but the achievement level has improved further. Many learners have been successful in passing the key skills examination in application of number and communication. All learners have substantial key skills folders which contain good-quality evidence. New, clearly written, learning materials have been created and successfully introduced over the past six months. The four application of number assignments include all the skills necessary for unit achievement and are related to business concepts; however, they do not relate directly to each learner's work role. A stimulating variety of good source material is used, including the internet. Learners take pride in their communication projects and use advanced information technology skills. Their progress is carefully monitored. All learners have an individually designed programme which takes into account their ability, interests and strengths. Completed tasks are not internally moderated sufficiently to ensure that all work is unique and can be accredited to the learner.

38. The retention of foundation modern apprentices has improved since the previous inspection, when only one learner from an intake of 21 was retained. However, 50 per cent of learners still leave training before completing their programmes. Current learners are making steady progress. Many have been on programme for eight months and have



completed between three and five units.

39. Achievement rates remain low. None of the four advanced modern apprentices completed their frameworks and only one remains in training. Three learners left the programme with no qualifications. One of these has gained a job. Only four of 22 foundation modern apprentices completed the modern apprenticeship framework. A further 10 completed their NVQs and nine are still in training. Thirty-six per cent of all learners do not complete their frameworks within the planned duration of training, but are retained in training. Some are later successful in achieving the modern apprenticeship framework.

### **Quality of education and training**

40. A great deal of work has been carried out since the previous inspection to ensure that precise targets are set for learners. This weakness, from the previous inspection, is now a strength. Learners' individual action plans are focused, linked to the NVQ standards, and take into account workplace issues and opportunities. Learners respond well to the short-term targets and progress more rapidly. New action plans are given at least every four weeks, but learners can have them more frequently. This flexibility enables learners to work at the pace they choose and allows the more able and enthusiastic learners to progress more quickly. Learners' ease of access to the work-based assessor and the training centre allows stringent monitoring. Additional help and support can be obtained easily. However, the short-term action points are not linked to a long-term plan, or individual learning plans. Learners' ability to take full responsibility for the whole learning process is restricted. Most employers are well informed about learners' progress and have regular communications from the organisation.

41. Learners are particularly well supported by all of ATO's staff and management. Staff know the learners well as individuals, and many take a keen interest in the learners' training, skill development and social and interpersonal needs. Good pastoral support and counselling are given when required. A range of tests and methods are used in initial assessment and during induction to identify individual characteristics, interests and weaknesses. Most learners value, and benefit from full-time training at the centre. Basic employment skills and administrative techniques boost their confidence and self-esteem. Work placements are thoroughly vetted for their suitability to meet individual learners' needs. Each learner's development rate is taken into consideration, and some attend work placements for just one day initially. This situation is monitored and attendance is increased when appropriate. If work-placement arrangements prove unsuitable, the learner returns to the training centre until a more suitable placement can be found. Some learners receive substantial specialist training at their workplace. This facility is not used sufficiently to further NVQ or key skills achievements.

42. Internal verification is very comprehensive. All aspects of the verification process are carried out accurately and systematically. Records are maintained to a high standard and action points to assessors are clear and detailed. An efficient system of meetings ensures that information is shared regularly. The assessor is quickly made aware of important

#### AIGBURTH TRAINING OPPORTUNITIES REINSPECTION

issues or changes to the national standards. Assessors are observed twice each year. Very good standardisation exercises are used during the year. Portfolio verification is thorough. Verification of incomplete and complete units are determined by the sample plan and random checks. The range of different assessment methodologies is checked against a schedule when authenticity and validity checks are conducted. Learners are very aware of the purpose of verification and who is responsible for it.

43. Initial assessments, inductions and the review process are generally satisfactory. A lot of useful information is gained by initial assessment, but it is not always used to best effect. Some learners work from key skills builder booklets. Learners who achieve low marks for either literacy or numeracy tests receive more individual support or more time, but this is not always sufficient to resolve specific weaknesses. Induction is comprehensive and has been modified recently, but it is too soon to judge the effect of changes. Learners have poor recall of induction information and it is not reinforced at later stages of the programme. Progress reviews are well documented. They record achievements and plan ahead, but questioning is often closed and not sufficiently challenging to identify any significant difficulties a learner might be experiencing.

44. ATO does not have enough specialist equipment to support teaching, learning and the assessment of administration programmes. Resources were identified as a strength in the previous inspection, but this standard has not been maintained. Some of the personal computers are in need of replacement and some use outdated software. Insufficient use is made of interactive CD-ROMs, business administration software and videos to inspire and motivate learners. The classroom is well equipped, but is often used for other purposes. During a formal teaching session, some learners used the room for private study and other people entered the room to collect equipment or use the photocopier. There is no portable recording equipment to enhance training or assessment in the workplace; for example by using taped professional discussions and digital photography. Some essential work-based skills are not identified in written accounts. There is an over-reliance on learners' personal statements and poor-quality evidence of work products.

45. Seven of the current learners were assessed to be on the borderline of entry level and level 1 when beginning their programmes and some learners have additional difficulties such as poor school attendance patterns, or behavioural difficulties. Most have never worked before. Some have had many work placements because they are unable to sustain key employability skills, for example, good attendance and punctuality. Those who have failed examinations in the past are seriously concerned about completing the technical certificate and key skills tests. There are no other programme options available to them. The provider has, on occasions, tried to persuade such learners to change to appropriate programmes with other training providers and has discussed providing alternative programmes. Neither option has been implemented successfully.

## **Leadership and management**

46. All staff involved in business administration training at operational level are part time and responsible for small parts of the programme. They work hard at their own responsibilities and have introduced significant changes since the previous inspection. New staff are just beginning to make a positive impact. However, there is no business administration champion and staff have only a weak understanding of each other's roles. Training is not sufficiently co-ordinated. The provider has taken a strategic decision to stop further recruitment to this programme.

47. Equality of opportunity is satisfactory. Fifty per cent of current learners are men. All learners are treated with respect, have good access to learning and assessment opportunities and are treated fairly. There is a good rapport between staff and learners.

48. The quality assurance arrangements to monitor employer training are weak. Insufficient checks are carried out on training in the workplace. The records of this training are not detailed enough.

**Health, social care & public services****Grade 3**

Programmes inspected	Number of learners	Contributory grade
Work-based learning for young people	45	3

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

**Strengths**

- good retention rates for advanced modern apprentices
- good communication with work placements
- good assessment and monitoring of learners' progress

**Weaknesses**

- some slow progress by learners
- declining retention rate of foundation modern apprentices
- insufficiently established key skills training

**Achievement and standards**

49. The retention rate for advanced modern apprentices has improved since the previous inspection, from 33 per cent in 2000-01, to 86 per cent in 2002-03. All the advanced modern apprentices recruited in 2003-04 are still in learning. Learners develop good practical skills and are judged by employers to be effective workers. Most advanced modern apprentices are permanent employees and many take up posts of responsibility upon completion of the modern apprenticeship framework. Learners build good portfolios of work, which are well organised and contain a wide range of evidence to demonstrate their competence.

50. Some learners make slow progress. Thirteen per cent of all learners remain in training beyond the planned completion date and 54 per cent of foundation modern apprentices who started in 2002-03 are still in training.

51. The retention rate for foundation modern apprentices is declining significantly. Between 2000-02, the retention rate was 78 per cent. However, it fell by 33 per cent in 2002-03. Almost 33 per cent of foundation modern apprentices who started in 2003-04 have left the programme without completing the framework or achieving any part of their qualification.

52. The achievement of key skills qualifications is unsatisfactory. Between 2001-03, approximately 66 per cent of learners completed NVQs but few achieved their key skills qualifications. Only 18 per cent of all learners who enrolled between 2000-01 and 2002-03 achieved all key skills elements.

## Quality of education and training

53. Good communications between ATO and the work placements creates good training experiences which meet the needs of learners. This strength has been maintained since the previous inspection. Many actions have been taken to improve the quality of the links between on- and off-the-job training. A handbook provides workplace supervisors with clear explanations of the requirements of the modern apprenticeship frameworks and the complementary roles of the supervisor and the assessor. Workplace supervisors are informed of the progress learners are making; they take part in progress reviews and are consulted and informed about planned assessments. Workplace supervisors appreciate the frequency of visits from assessors and most describe their relationship with assessors as one of partnership. Some workplace supervisors feel they would be better able to meet learners' needs if they had more information about the objectives and activities included in off-the-job training.

54. The assessment and monitoring of learners' progress has improved since the previous inspection and is now good. Assessments are well planned and learners fully understand the assessment process. Assessors give appropriately detailed feedback to learners and, in negotiation with the learners, plan clear, short-term targets for further training and assessment. Assessments, reviews, progress made, and action plans are recorded according to awarding body requirements and good quality assurance practice. Internal verification is sound. Sampling schedules record which units have been verified and those planned for verification. Internal verifiers observe and monitor assessors at work and determine if further training is required. All learners have their progress reviewed regularly and progress is measured against learners' targets as expressed in unit achievement deadlines. The review process only considers progress made since the previous review and does not give learners a comprehensive picture of their progress in training.

55. Both on- and off-the-job training are satisfactory. Portfolio evidence demonstrates what is practised in the workplace. Clear schemes of work and lesson plans describe the comprehensive off-the-job NVQ and technical certificate training. The training room is light and airy and is fitted with learning aids. There is a good stock of printed resources and learning materials that are designed to assist learners in completing tasks that reinforce their understanding of child development, care and education. Most learners aspire to become qualified childcare workers and many hope to become nursery owners. The programmes offered at ATO enable learners to realise their aspirations. Learners are offered the opportunity to gain an additional qualification in food hygiene.

56. Support for learners is satisfactory. Learners benefit from frequent visits by ATO's staff to work placements. Assessors are readily available, workplace supervisors encourage learners to succeed and both on- and off-the-job training is offered within a supportive environment. All learners are assessed for literacy and numeracy skills during induction. Where the assessment indicates that there is a need for additional learning support assessors, trainers and tutors offer general support, but none of them have been trained specifically to support such development. There are no specialists available to

## AIGBURTH TRAINING OPPORTUNITIES REINSPECTION

work with learners who have more serious learning difficulties.

57. Key skills training is not established within the training programmes. Key skills achievement has been unsatisfactory and has prevented many learners from completing full modern apprenticeship frameworks. Key skills training has not been integrated with the vocational training programme and is not offered until close to the end of the training programme. ATO has reviewed this situation and plans are being finalised to integrate key skills training with the delivery of the already integrated technical certificate and NVQ. The success of these plans cannot be judged at this point.

### **Leadership and management**

58. Management of the learning programme has improved since the previous inspection. Mandatory off-the-job training days have been established, to deliver the background knowledge for successful, practical work-based learning. Action has been taken to improve the assessment and review processes in an attempt to improve both retention and achievement rates. Links between on- and off-the-job training have been improved. The actions are at an early stage of development and their success cannot be measured. Team meetings, assessors meetings and early years care and education meetings discuss more effective ways of helping learners to achieve their goals.