

REINSPECTION REPORT

N&B Training Company Limited Reinspection

23 September 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

N&B Training Company Limited Reinspection

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REINSPECTION REPORT

DESCRIPTION OF THE PROVIDER

1. N&B Training Company Limited (N&B) was established in March 1998 to provide work-based learning for young people. It offers advanced and foundation modern apprenticeships in early years care and in playwork across Surrey, Middlesex, Hampshire and Berkshire. N&B recruits most of its learners from Surrey, and the Surrey Learning and Skills Council funds the training. The company operates from premises in Walton-on-Thames but will be moving shortly. Training is provided at N&B's premises or at learners' work placements.
2. N&B is managed by two directors. The training manager and centre co-ordinator are newly appointed and both have a caseload of learners. They are supported by three full-time trainer/assessors and one part-time assessor. A further part-time literacy, numeracy and language tutor/assessor is due to join the company in the next few weeks.
3. According to the 2001 census, Surrey has a minority ethnic representation of 5 per cent, compared with 9.1 per cent for England and Wales. Four per cent of N&B's learners are from minority ethnic groups. Ten per cent of its learners are men. In 2001, the proportion of school leavers in Surrey achieving five or more general certificates of secondary education at grade C or above was 58.2 per cent, compared with 47.9 per cent in England. Surrey is an economically strong county. The unemployment rate in April 2003 was 3.8 per cent, compared with the national average of 5.2 per cent.

SCOPE OF PROVISION

Health, social care & public services

4. There are 129 modern apprentices in health, social care and public services. Fifty-three are following foundation modern apprenticeships in early years childcare and education. The remaining 76 are on advanced modern apprenticeship programmes. Of these, 14 are on the playwork programme and the other 62 are on early years childcare. The expected duration of the programme for foundation modern apprentices is 14 months and for advanced modern apprentices 24 months. Since the previous inspection, learner numbers have increased in playwork and in early years childcare and education. Twelve of the 14 learners on the playwork programme are men. At the time of the previous inspection, N&B offered training in care for the elderly. It no longer does so. All learners have employed status. Assessment is carried out in the workplace for early years childcare and education learners. Learners on the playwork programmes are assessed in a variety of venues such as after school clubs, holiday clubs and opportunity groups. Assessors are occupationally competent. Three assessors hold an appropriate assessors' award, and one member of staff is currently working towards it. Two assessors are working towards the award for internal verification. There is currently one part-time internal verifier.

ABOUT THE REINSPECTION

Number of inspectors	4
Number of inspection days	12
Number of learner interviews	23
Number of staff interviews	15
Number of employer interviews	10
Number of visits	12

OVERALL JUDGEMENT

5. The ALL's inspection in June 2003 found that training in health, social care and public services was satisfactory. Equality of opportunity was also satisfactory. However, the organisation's leadership and management and its arrangements for quality assurance were unsatisfactory. At the end of the reinspection process, all aspects of the provision were judged satisfactory.

GRADES

Grades awarded at previous inspection

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

Leadership and management	4
Contributory grades:	
Equality of opportunity	3
Quality assurance	4
Health, social care & public services	3
Contributory grades:	
Work-based learning for young people	3

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

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

KEY FINDINGS

Achievement and standards

6. **The proportion of learners remaining on programme is increasing.** Eleven of the 12 playwork learners who started in 2003-04 are still in learning. Sixty-nine per cent of advanced modern apprentices in early years were retained in 2002-03 and 83 per cent of the 2003-04 intake are still in learning. For foundation modern apprentices, the retention rate was 66 per cent in 2002-03, and 80 per cent of the 2003-04 intake are still in learning.

7. The standard of work in learners' portfolios is satisfactory, but a significant number are making **slow progress towards achieving national vocational qualifications (NVQs)**. Learners are not always aware of how few units they have successfully achieved. The achievement rate for modern apprenticeship frameworks continues to be unsatisfactory.

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
Health, social care & public services	0	0	0	2	0	0	0	2
Total	0	0	0	2	0	0	0	2

8. There is good development of learners' skills and knowledge in the workplace.

Learners work alongside qualified and experienced staff who offer advice and guidance on practical skills and written tasks. In many workplaces learners gain valuable experience of working with children of different ages. Staff meetings are often used as teaching opportunities, and employers encourage their learners to attend external training programmes.

9. Learners receive **good support and guidance**. Assessors visit learners at least once a month and more frequently if they have an identified need. Visits are used for individual guidance, unit planning and assessment. The employer, the learner and the assessor meet every eight weeks for a thorough review of the learner's progress. Assessors are approachable and professional, and learners feel confident about discussing personal issues with them. Induction for learners has improved.

10. Arrangements for literacy, numeracy and language support are satisfactory. Initial

assessments include literacy and numeracy or key skills tests. One member of staff has attended core curriculum training and another is working towards a basic skills qualification. A new member of staff, who is fully qualified, is due to join the provider within the next few weeks.

11. Resources are satisfactory. There are sufficient staff who are qualified childcare workers. They have a wide range of childcare experience and their caseloads are acceptable. Most work placements have an extensive range of resources including up-to-date reference books, computers and childcare journals. However, N&B still does not monitor resources. Accommodation at N&B's training centre is inadequate and is not accessible to people with mobility difficulties. However, plans are well underway to move to new premises.

12. The arrangements for the assessment of the NVQ are satisfactory. Since the initial inspection, planned standardisation meetings have been held every month. These have led to changes in the way evidence is collected, but it is too early to see the effect of these changes. The organisation of learners' NVQ portfolios has improved and they now include a clear contents guide.

Leadership and management

13. **Communication within the company continues to be effective** and follow clear lines. Senior managers work alongside other employed staff and informal communication is still effective. There is a well-established and planned schedule of team meetings which are used effectively to share information. There is now **better use of target-setting** to improve the company's quality standards.

14. N&B is committed to the continuous development of its staff. All staff hold or are working towards an appropriate training qualification. The company has been quick to fill the gaps in experience and knowledge resulting from staff changes. All staff have opportunities to attend a range of training, including teaching qualifications, working with dyslexia, and child protection. There is an established appraisal process.

15. There is satisfactory communication with employers through regular visits by assessors, employers' involvement in learners' training and reviews, and responses to questionnaires and telephone surveys.

16. Arrangements for the **assessment and development of learners' literacy and numeracy skills have improved** since the previous inspection. N&B has been active in seeking a solution to the literacy and numeracy needs of learners.

17. **Although N&B has initiated some developments to co-ordinate on- and off-the-job training, this is still an area of weakness.** There is no overall planning of the provider's or employers' training. Assessors record training on learners' review documents but this is usually done retrospectively. Information is sent out to employers about proposed induction and training events, but with insufficient detail about times and venues. There are still no planned key skills workshops.

18. **The training provision for the technical certificate and key skills is inconsistent.** Some early years learners have nearly completed their NVQ work but have only recently been told they will need to produce additional evidence for the technical certificate. The assessors are not all training learners towards the technical certificate. Not all learners on the playwork programme attend off-the-job training. Some learners have completed key skills qualifications while others have not yet started to collect evidence of their communication and number skills. There is little key skills training taking place.

19. The analysis and use of management information continues to be a weakness. N&B collects a range of information on learners but does not use it to monitor and analyse trends in achievement, progress or the numbers of early leavers.

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

Leadership and management

Strengths

- effective internal communications
- good staff development

Weaknesses

- incomplete co-ordination of on- and off-the-job training
- insufficient analysis and use of management information

Health, social care & public services

Strengths

- good development of skills and knowledge in the workplace
- good support and guidance for learners

Weaknesses

- slow progress towards achievement of frameworks
- inadequate organisation of training

DETAILED REINSPECTION FINDINGS

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

Grade 3

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

Strengths

- effective internal communications
- good staff development

Weaknesses

- incomplete co-ordination of on- and off-the-job training
- insufficient analysis and use of management information

20. Communications within the company continue to be effective and follow clear lines. The company's middle management has been restructured, with two new members of staff now in place, and improvements have been made to working relationships. Senior managers work alongside other staff. Informal communication between all staff is still effective, but issues and actions are now being formally recorded. The schedule of team meetings is carefully planned and well established. There are staff, management and standardisation meetings with formal minutes and action points. All meetings have standing agenda items to ensure that topics are discussed consistently throughout the company. Meetings are used effectively to share information. There is now better use of target-setting to improve the company's quality standards. All staff have updated job descriptions which contain targets linked to their role.

21. N&B is committed to the continuous development of its staff. All staff hold or are working towards an appropriate training qualification. Staff changes since the previous inspection have left gaps in experience and knowledge, specifically in internal verification and literacy and numeracy support. One member of staff has had literacy and numeracy core curriculum training and another is working towards literacy and numeracy qualifications. One assessor is taking an internal verification award and another is due to start. Staff take a range of other training courses, including teaching qualifications, working with dyslexia, and child protection. They have regular appraisals and performance reviews at which action points and training needs are recorded. Staff development was a strength at the previous inspection.

22. There is satisfactory communication with employers through regular visits by assessors. Employers are involved in learners' training and progress reviews, and respond to questionnaires and telephone surveys. Signed training agreements are negotiated with all employers.

23. Arrangements for the assessment and development of learners' literacy and

numeracy skills have improved since the previous inspection. N&B has been active in trying to meet the literacy and numeracy needs of learners. Existing staff have taken appropriate training courses, and a new member of staff is joining the company, who is experienced and qualified in literacy and numeracy support.

24. Although N&B has initiated some developments to co-ordinate on- and off-the-job training, it is still an area of weakness. There is no overall planning of training. There is no formal system to give managers an overview of the types of training that employers are providing. Assessors now record training on learners' review documents but this is usually done retrospectively. N&B sends employers a one-page document which lists inductions and proposed workshops, such as technical certificate and child protection training. The proposed off-the-job learning plan does not include, the venues, the times of courses, or who is to facilitate them. A list of planned dates for technical certificate training has been circulated to employers and learners, but there are still no dates for key skills workshops. The take-up of these courses has been poor for example, only one learner turned up for one training course. N&B has been flexible in its approach to some training for example, technical certificate sessions are now being arranged in some workplaces. This does, however, create staff shortages for some nurseries. N&B has recognised that the timing of training sessions is an issue, and it is planning to hold evening and weekend workshops for learners. Some learners were positive about this initiative.

25. The analysis and use of management information continues to be a weakness. N&B collects a range of information on learners. However, it still does not use this to identify and analyse trends in achievement, progress or retention to inform management for planning the development of the training provision.

Equality of opportunity

Contributory grade 3

26. N&B has an updated and detailed equal opportunities policy which is clearly written and contains appropriate references to current legislation. It is placed in a central file for easy reference. All learners and staff are made aware of, and given paperwork on, equal opportunities, and the appeals, grievance and complaints procedures during induction. There are some members of staff who have not had training in equal opportunities and diversity. It is, however, a standard agenda item in staff meetings. Employers' equal opportunities policies are checked before new work placements are approved.

27. Learners' understanding of equal opportunities is regularly checked during progress reviews. Staff use an activities form to record assessments of learners' practical skills. This includes a section on equal opportunities and is used to encourage learners to reflect on how they will ensure that all children are included in each activity. Learners' completed responses demonstrate a good understanding of the actions they need to take. There are wall displays in the training room showing cultural festivals, such as Ganesh Chaturthi and Succoth, with their dates and what they are about, and suggestions for how learners could celebrate them with the children in their workplaces.

28. Most learners have a satisfactory understanding of equal opportunities and what

action to take if they wish to make a complaint. N&B keeps a record of all complaints and actions taken. However, although the complaints file includes a clear procedure and associated forms, the actions and outcomes recorded are not always dated. Learners do not all have a clear understanding of the appeals procedure for NVQ assessments.

29. N&B regularly collects information on learners' ethnicity, gender and disabilities, but does not analyse this or use it to make management decisions. Four per cent of current learners are from minority ethnic groups and N&B intends to increase this to 5 per cent. Ten per cent of the learners are men. N&B promotes training through visits to schools, conferences and exhibitions. A member of staff has developed stronger links with Connexions partnerships, and regularly visits centres to interview potential learners.

Quality assurance

Contributory grade 3

30. N&B has made significant progress in developing its quality assurance system. This was a weakness at the previous inspection, and is now satisfactory. There is a quality assurance policy and comprehensive procedures are now in place to ensure all staff are working towards a common goal. The procedures file contains up-to-date documents covering all activities from initial assessment to exit as well as clear guidelines on how and when they should be completed. The guidance on the observations of teaching and learning is a particularly good example. A good quality assessors' handbook and an assessors' induction booklet have recently been developed. All staff have been issued with their own copies. They have also been given a file containing all the company's standard policies and procedures. Employers' agreements have been revised. There is a thorough induction procedure for new assessors, who shadow an experienced assessor until they are competent to work on their own.

31. The quality assurance of training is now satisfactory. Assessments in the workplace are now being observed and the results recorded with related action points and training needs identified. Progress review forms and individual learning plans are now routinely sampled for quality. This process is starting to identify those not completed adequately, and action is being taken to remedy unsatisfactory procedures. Internal verification procedures are satisfactory.

32. N&B seeks the views of learners and employers. Employers are either sent a questionnaire or are telephoned. Responses are analysed by managers and action is taken and recorded on any issues. Learners' feedback is collected using questionnaires after induction and at other times during their training.

33. Careful attention is paid to the health and safety of learners in work placements. Procedures for new employers include a comprehensive health and safety check. Learners receive health and safety training at their inductions with N&B and with their employers. Health and safety are monitored throughout the programmes at learners' progress reviews.

34. The self-assessment process is satisfactory. The company's most recent self-assessment report and a related development plan were produced in August 2004. N&B

is now more aware of its own strengths and weaknesses.

AREAS OF LEARNING

Health, social care & public services

Grade 3

Programmes inspected	Number of learners	Contributory grade
Work-based learning for young people	129	3

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

Strengths

- good development of skills and knowledge in the workplace
- good support and guidance for learners

Weaknesses

- slow progress towards achievement of frameworks
- inadequate organisation of training

Achievement and standards

35. The proportion of learners who stay in learning is improving. Eleven of the 12 playwork learners who started in 2003-04 are still in learning. More early years learners are staying on programmes. The retention rate for advanced modern apprentices was 69 per cent in 2002-03, and 83 per cent of the 2003-04 intake are still in learning. For foundation modern apprentices the retention rate in 2002-03 was 66 per cent, and 80 per cent of the 2003-04 intake are still in learning. The standard of work in learners' portfolios is satisfactory.

36. A significant number of learners continue to make slow progress towards achieving NVQs. Early years learners who started programmes in 2003 have completed between one and three units, while 71 per cent of learners on the playwork programme have only achieved one unit in 10 months. There has been some confusion by N&B about signing off NVQ units and the completion of technical certificates. This is now resolved but has meant that some learners have not yet achieved their NVQ. Learners are not always aware of how few units they have successfully achieved. N&B proposes to give certificates for completed units but has not yet done so. Achievement rates for modern apprenticeship frameworks continue to be unsatisfactory. Of the 52 advanced modern apprentices who started early years programmes in 2001-02, only 25 per cent have completed their frameworks and 10 are still in learning. Of the 2002-03 intake, only three advanced modern apprentices out of 37 have completed all aspects of the framework, with 22 still in learning.

Quality of education and training

37. There is good development of learners' skills and knowledge in the workplaces. Learners learn practical skills by working alongside qualified and experienced staff. Staff offer advice and guidance to enable learners to complete written tasks. Learners report that staff take time to demonstrate new childcare skills and allow them to practise those skills with supervision. Employers recognise that learners have improved their childcare skills. In many workplaces the learners gain valuable experience of working with children of different ages. Where learners are employed to work with a specific age group, arrangements are made to enable them to work for short periods with other age groups. All learners attend workplace staff training sessions, and staff meetings are often used as teaching opportunities, for example to update practice. Employers encourage their learners to attend external training programmes. These have covered a range of topics including behaviour management and child protection. Several nurseries have qualified assessors and trainers who give their learners regular training sessions on specific NVQ topics.

38. Assessors give good support and guidance to individual learners. They visit learners at least monthly. If a learner is completing the technical certificate or has identified learning needs, the visits are more frequent. Visits are planned to include individual guidance, unit planning and assessment. The new unit plans enable the learners to understand the requirements and prepare for assessment. In early years, assessors guide learners towards using a good range of methods for gathering evidence. Assessors provide additional learning materials if asked or if a need is identified. They can arrange, for example, for learners to record their evidence on a portable dictation machine. Employer, learner and assessor meet every eight weeks for a thorough review of the learner's progress. The meeting is documented and copies of the records are given to each party. Assessors are approachable and professional and learners feel confident about discussing personal issues with them. They are easily accessible by mobile telephone, and in some cases e-mail, and respond promptly. The previous inspection identified the management of the induction process as a weakness. This has now improved. N&B has extended the length of the induction session and now provides more information about the NVQ. The company has ensured that most learners attend the training centre for induction and that it takes place within six weeks of the start of the programme.

39. Arrangements for literacy, numeracy and language support are satisfactory. Initial assessments include tests for literacy and numeracy or key skills. Learners identified as having literacy and numeracy needs receive satisfactory support from assessors. One member of staff has attended core curriculum training, and another assessor is currently working towards a basic skills qualification. A new, fully qualified member of staff is due to join the company within the next few weeks.

40. Resources are satisfactory. Staff are qualified childcare workers and have a range of childcare experience. There are sufficient staff with acceptable workloads. N&B's accommodation is inadequate and is not accessible by people with mobility difficulties.

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However, plans are well underway to move to new premises, and most training takes place in the workplace. Most work placements have an extensive range of resources, including up-to-date reference books, computers and childcare journals. As identified at the previous inspection, N&B does not monitor the resources to assure the quality of the training provision.

41. New individual learning plans have recently been introduced which include the results of the initial assessment. Some plans do not contain short-term targets for achievement. Where an additional learning need is identified the arrangements for extra support are not always clearly recorded. The suitability of programmes is agreed between learners, employers and N&B staff. Following initial discussions, learners are told what level of training is recommended. The arrangements for the assessment of the NVQ are satisfactory. Since the previous inspection, standardisation meetings have been held once a month. The meetings have led to changes in the way evidence is collected but it is too early to see the effect of these changes. The organisation of learners' NVQ portfolios has improved since the last monitoring visit and they now include a clear contents guide.

42. N&B has responded to feedback from employers that cannot release learners for a day of training at the centre. It now offers support for learning in workplaces instead of at the centre. Workshops are being organised in the evenings and at weekends to enable learners to attend. At present, learners are not all receiving off-the-job training. When training does take place, trainers establish a good rapport with learners.

Leadership and management

43. There is satisfactory communication between assessors, employers and learners. Outcomes of assessments and reviews are shared. Some employers reported that information about training events was not detailed enough. A few employers would like to know more about the training programme so that they can match their training to the needs of the learner. There is no provision for learners to attend key skills training sessions; only one member of staff has appropriate experience to deliver this training.

44. Induction of new staff continues to be extensive. When they first join the company, they shadow experienced colleagues. Staff are well supported with regular and effective professional development. Since the previous inspection, there have been several staff changes: a new training manager and a centre co-ordinator have been appointed and some changes have been made in how some aspects of training are delivered. Staff continue to work within a specific geographical area to minimise travel, maximise contact with learners, and ensure regular contact with the office.

45. Internal verification satisfactorily identifies areas for improvement in assessors' practice. At the time of the reinspection, changes are being made to the internal verification process. Staff are aware of the new quality assurance policy and procedures. They are implementing the procedures and are beginning to use the new paperwork but it is too early to see the impact of this on the learners' experience. At this

stage there are some shortcomings in the completion of documents in some portfolios. The self-assessment report is detailed and thorough. However, it does not always accurately reflect the current level of activity.

46. The promotion of equal opportunities continues to be satisfactory with most learners understanding the care and education of children in a multi-cultural society. Data is not routinely collected or analysed to identify the unsatisfactory achievement of frameworks.

47. Arrangements for training are incomplete. The training provided for the technical certificate and key skills qualification is inconsistent. Some early years learners have almost completed their NVQ work but have recently been told they will need to produce additional evidence for the technical certificate. The assessors are not all providing training for the technical certificate. Some foundation modern apprentices have attended training at N&B's centre, and had further training from an assessor in their workplaces. Arrangements have recently been made for 10 learners on the playwork programme to attend off-the-job training sessions in the workplace. For the other four learners no arrangements have been made. The technical certificate for playwork at level 3 is not yet available from the awarding body. No preparation has been done to enable training to be carried out when it becomes available. Key skills are not effectively planned into the training programme for all learners. Some learners have completed key skills qualifications while others have not yet started to collect evidence of their communication and number skills. Little training takes place, but assessors do provide learners with sets of questions to answer. Levels of training for modern apprentices on playwork programmes vary considerably. Not all learners receive the same high quality of input.