

INSPECTION REPORT

Mode Training Ltd

09 June 2005



ADULT LEARNING
INSPECTORATE

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 aged over 16
- provision in further education colleges for people aged 19 and over
- **learnndirect** provision
- Adult and Community Learning
- training funded by Jobcentre Plus
- education and training in prisons, at the invitation of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Prisons.

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

Pre-inspection analysis

The resources allocated to a cycle 2 inspection are primarily determined by the findings from the previous inspection. Account is also taken of information about achievement and retention obtained from the funding body, and any significant changes in the size or scope of the provision.

Where a provider has received good grades in cycle 1, the cycle 2 inspection is relatively light. If the provider offers a number of areas of learning, a restricted sample is inspected.

Where a provider has received satisfactory grades in cycle 1, the cycle 2 inspection is less intensive and it is possible that not all areas of learning are included.

Where there are significant unsatisfactory grades from cycle 1, the intensity of the cycle 2 inspection is broadly the same as cycle 1, and all significant areas of learning are inspected.

Providers that have not previously been inspected will receive a full inspection.

Overall effectiveness

The grades given for areas of learning and leadership and management will be used to arrive at a judgement about the overall effectiveness of the provider.

An **outstanding** provider should typically have leadership and management and at least half of the areas of learning judged to be a grade 1. All area of learning grades will be graded 1 or 2.

A **good** provider should have leadership and management and at least half of the area of learning grades judged to be a grade 2 or better. A good training provider should not have any grade 4s, and few grade 3s in the areas of learning.

A **satisfactory** provider should have adequate or better grades in leadership and management and in at least two thirds of the area of learning grades. An adequate provider might have a range of grades across areas of learning, some of which might be graded 4.

Provision will normally be deemed to be **inadequate** where more than one third of the area of learning grades and/or leadership and management are judged to be inadequate.

The final decision as to whether the provision is inadequate rests with the Chief Inspector of Adult Learning.

Grading

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

- *grade 1 - outstanding*
- *grade 2 - good*
- *grade 3 - satisfactory*
- *grade 4 - inadequate*

INSPECTION REPORT

Mode Training Ltd

Contents

Summary

Description of the provider	1
Overall effectiveness	1
Key challenges for Mode Training Ltd	1
Grades	2
About the inspection	2
Key Findings	2
What learners like about Mode Training Ltd	6
What learners think Mode Training Ltd could improve	6

Detailed inspection findings

Leadership and management	7
Equality of opportunity	8
Quality improvement	9
Hairdressing & beauty therapy	11

INSPECTION REPORT

DESCRIPTION OF THE PROVIDER

1. Mode Training Limited (MTL) was established in 1997. It is a privately owned company, with its main training salon close to Liverpool city centre. It provides work-based learning in Liverpool and the surrounding area for apprentices and advanced apprentices working towards vocational qualifications in hairdressing, including 23 subcontracted from Scientiam Limited. Its funding comes from Greater Merseyside Learning and Skills Council. It also provides training for private, fee-paying students.

2. The senior management team consists of a managing director and a company secretary, who carry out the strategic decision-making and day-to-day running of the company. The company employs 13 staff, who are responsible for training and assessment, progress reviews, learner support, internal verification, recruitment, retention and achievement, and the administration of the company.

OVERALL EFFECTIVENESS

Grade 3

3. **The overall effectiveness of the provision is satisfactory.** MTL's leadership and management are satisfactory as are its arrangements for equality of opportunity and quality improvement, and its work-based learning in hairdressing and beauty therapy.

4. **The inspection team was broadly confident in the reliability of the self-assessment process.** The self-assessment process included all the staff, and they understood their responsibilities and the value of the process. MTL has accurately identified most of its strengths and weaknesses, and produced appropriate supporting evidence. Learners' and employers' feedback is used in the self-assessment process, but it is not analysed sufficiently to identify trends over time.

5. **The provider has demonstrated that it is in a good position to make improvements.** Since the company was inspected in 2002, it has made significant changes and improvements which have rectified most of the identified weaknesses. The development plan that accompanies the self-assessment report is well thought out and includes clear strategies to improve retention and achievement rates.

KEY CHALLENGES FOR MODE TRAINING LTD:

- continue to focus on improving retention and achievement rates
- maintain and continue to develop the good standard of practical training
- further develop the management information system
- introduce better systems to measure and evaluate improvement

- further develop the equality of opportunity strategy

GRADES

grade 1 = outstanding, grade 2 = good, grade 3 = satisfactory, grade 4 = inadequate

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

Hairdressing & beauty therapy			3
Contributory areas:	Number of learners	Contributory grade	
<i>Hairdressing</i> Apprenticeships for young people	100	3	

ABOUT THE INSPECTION

6. All areas of learning offered by MTL were reported on and graded.

Number of inspectors	2
Number of inspection days	8
Number of learners interviewed	23
Number of staff interviewed	11
Number of employers interviewed	7
Number of locations/sites/learning centres visited	1
Number of partners/external agencies interviewed	2
Number of visits	1

KEY FINDINGS

Achievements and standards

7. **Learners develop good hairdressing skills**, and work competently at a higher level than would be expected of them for the length of time they have been in learning.
8. **The achievement rate for apprenticeship frameworks is poor.** In the past three years, MTL has introduced a good range of strategies to improve retention and achievement rates. The indications are that more learners are now staying on programme and making progress towards achieving their qualification.

The quality of provision

9. **The standard of practical training in hairdressing is good.** Learners receive individual coaching to help them develop their hairdressing skills quickly. Tutors are well qualified and have current industrial experience which they use to show learners how their skills can be used in the workplace. Health and safety is reinforced during practical sessions, and every opportunity is taken to link learners' background knowledge to their practical work.

10. **Co-ordination of on- and off-the-job training is good.** Employers clearly understand their responsibility for supporting their learners' progress towards their qualifications. MTL's staff give employers clear targets to achieve with their learners, linking them effectively to the national vocational qualification (NVQ). Employers have a good understanding of the NVQ and key skills.

11. **Learners' progress reviews are comprehensive and very effective** at ensuring that learners and employers have a clear understanding of what progress is being made. Learners are set challenging targets with realistic timescales that link effectively to their assessments and NVQ. Staff are skilled at identifying learners who are falling behind with their work and at providing additional support to help them achieve their targets.

12. **Learners have good workplaces that promote high commercial standards.** Employers offer learners good support, providing them with opportunities for additional training, and encouraging them to become involved with activities such as competition work.

13. Induction is satisfactory. Learners are given good advice and guidance, and have an initial assessment that correctly identifies their support needs. Learners are on appropriate courses.

14. Assessment is satisfactory and takes place at MTL's training centre and in the workplace. Assessment planning effectively maximises assessment opportunities for learners. Assessors frequently visit on-the-job training sessions to ensure the quality and consistency of training.

15. **Learners' long-term targets are not routinely kept up to date.** They are set at the start of a learner's programme and take in to consideration the results of initial assessment and the learners' prior attainment. They do not reflect the progress made towards the qualification.

Leadership and management

16. MTL has developed **particularly effective external and internal communications.** The number of employers involved with the modern apprenticeship has increased, and co-ordination between employers and MTL has improved. MTL has developed good commercial links within the hairdressing industry which benefit and enhance the learners' experience. MTL's staff have built good links with local schools and frequently attend careers events and carry out mock interviews.

17. Since 2002, when it was last inspected, MTL has developed a good range of strategies to improve retention and achievement rates. Initial occupational assessments have improved. Additional staff have been recruited and there is more assessment in the workplace. Learners' progress is reviewed more frequently and learners who are falling

behind and at risk of leaving the programme are identified. MTL has been skilful at targeting support for learners who are in danger of leaving the programme.

18. MTL has a **clear strategic plan** which sets achievable objectives and is linked to the company's development plan. However, there is little clear documentary evidence that progress with the development plan is being reviewed.

19. **MTL makes too little use of its management information system to produce reports on its performance.** The company has identified this weakness and a new management information system has recently been installed.

20. **MTL has been successful in widening participation in learning.** It has been involved in a successful initiative to allow school students to work towards vocational qualifications during part of the school week. This targets students from disadvantaged backgrounds who have had little educational success. Under the initiative, many have achieved NVQs at level 1 in hairdressing, and a significant number have applied to join the apprenticeship scheme when they leave school.

21. Learners and staff have a satisfactory understanding of equality of opportunity and diversity. Learners receive training at their induction and have a good awareness of their employment rights and responsibilities. MTL's staff monitor equality of opportunity in learners' workplaces and reinforce employers' understanding of legislation.

22. **MTL does not have a sufficiently clear strategy for equality of opportunity.** No targets are set and there is too little focus on recruitment from under-represented groups. Marketing materials have recently been changed, and they now include images to encourage learners from under-represented groups to apply for training.

23. **The quality improvement process is clear, comprehensive, systematic and well understood** by all staff. The process includes a wide range of procedures relating to the key aspects of a learner's experience. Problems identified have received a prompt and effective response.

24. Internal verification is satisfactory. The process is systematic and thorough, feedback to assessors is clear, and there are regular meetings to ensure a consistent approach to assessment and to discuss learners' progress.

25. **MTL does not sufficiently measure and evaluate its quality improvement processes.** Managers do not analyse learners' and employers' feedback, or the results of observations of teaching sessions, in order to identify trends and measure the overall effectiveness of its actions.

Leadership and management

Strengths

- particularly effective and productive external links and internal communication
- good range of strategies to improve retention and achievement rates
- successful project to widen participation
- very comprehensive and responsive quality assurance system

Weaknesses

- insufficient use of the management information system to manage performance
- incomplete equality of opportunity strategy
- inadequate measurement of improvement

Hairdressing & beauty therapy

Hairdressing

Strengths

- well-developed practical hairdressing skills
- good standard of practical training
- good co-ordination of on- and off-the-job training
- detailed and particularly effective progress reviews
- good-quality workplaces

Weaknesses

- low achievement rates for apprenticeship frameworks
- insufficient updating of learners' long-term targets

WHAT LEARNERS LIKE ABOUT MODE TRAINING LTD:

- the friendly approach of staff
- the support with written work
- being treated as an adult
- meeting people at college
- the hair shows

WHAT LEARNERS THINK MODE TRAINING LTD COULD IMPROVE:

- the canteen facilities
- the arrangements for travelling to college - 'it's too far from the bus station'
- the lift - 'it's too slow'

DETAILED INSPECTION FINDINGS

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

Grade 3

Strengths

- particularly effective and productive external links and internal communication
- good range of strategies to improve retention and achievement rates
- successful project to widen participation
- very comprehensive and responsive quality assurance system

Weaknesses

- insufficient use of the management information system to manage performance
- incomplete equality of opportunity strategy
- inadequate measurement of improvement

26. External and internal communications are particularly effective and productive. MTL has increased the number of employers involved with the modern apprenticeship scheme. Workplaces are of a good quality and benefit learners. Regular contact ensures that learners' training is well co-ordinated between employers and MTL. Employers are kept informed of learners' progress through monthly progress reviews, and are made aware of planned training at MTL. Quarterly newsletters update them on developments and learners' success. A well-received employers' handbook ensures that employers are aware of their own and MTL's role. Employers are involved in a well-presented annual celebration of learners' success. Parents' and employers' meetings are held twice a year. Good commercial links are developing with the hairdressing industry, and MTL's staff benefit from in-house training events to update their skills. The company also has good links with another training provider for which it provides off-the-job training, and there is sharing of good practice. The centre manager is a founder member of a new forum intended to provide a collective voice for hairdressing providers in the Greater Merseyside area. Its contacts with schools are good, and MTL's staff attend careers evenings and take part in mock interviews. Regular visits to local Connexions' offices provide updates on opportunities for learners. The centre is now providing taster sessions for year 11 pupils at the end of the school year. Internal communications are good. Staff meet monthly, both for team meetings and for internal verification, and they are kept informed of developments. A standing agenda is used for meetings, but the minutes are verbatim rather than outcomes of discussions, and some of the actions arising are too vague. There is much informal discussion between staff. Staff are well motivated and feel free to raise issues and share information on learners' needs. The well-organised appraisal system has led to a range of staff training. Strategic objectives are reinforced during appraisal.

27. MTL has developed a good range of strategies to improve retention and achievement rates. More thorough initial and occupational assessment helps staff to place learners on appropriate programmes and plan support. Analysis of early leavers identified that many left their programme within the first 12 weeks. MTL introduced an eight-week trial period to enable learners to be better informed about their career choice before starting a

programme. New learners and those with additional learning needs now have additional progress reviews. The company employs a member of staff specifically to carry out progress reviews, allowing assessors to concentrate on assessment. Learners who are having difficulty are given extra help by staff. A new monitoring system has been introduced to check progress more carefully. Staff try to encourage learners who leave to return to MTL. Learners who lack confidence spend more time at MTL before going into employment. The number of early leavers has been reduced over the past two years, and indications are that the retention rate is improving and that learners are making progress and are on target to achieve their apprenticeship frameworks.

28. Planning of the provision is satisfactory. MTL has a strategic plan which sets clear objectives, each accompanied by a brief set of actions. This plan is not developed into an operational plan, but MTL uses the self-assessment development plan as the key planning document and links it to the company's strategic objectives. An overall timetable helps to draw the plans together. However, there is no clear evidence that progress on the development plan is reviewed.

29. Management of resources is satisfactory. Salons are well equipped and maintained. Rooms are of a good size and are clean and the information technology room has suitable seating and equipment. Staff have appropriate vocational qualifications and are audited to assess capability. MTL has identified that only one member of staff has a teaching qualification, and it plans to train additional staff from September.

30. MTL has a clear strategy for managing literacy, numeracy and language support. All learners undergo a diagnostic test at the start of the course and are tested again after six months to gauge their progress. Small-group support is provided at MTL's centre, and assessors and salons are made aware of the learners' support needs and help them in the workplace. However, although the member of staff who provides small-group support holds key skills qualifications, he is not appropriately qualified in literacy, numeracy and language support. There are indications that the support is effective but there has been no analysis to measure this. Some written materials are adapted to help learners who have reading difficulties.

31. There has been insufficient use of management information to monitor performance. Reports from the management information system have not given a clear overview of retention, progress and achievement rates. Decisions arising from management team meetings are not clear. Internal verification meetings discuss the progress of individuals rather than taking an overview of all the learners. Comparisons are not made between the performances of different assessors, or the performance of an individual assessor over time. The new management information system is expected to provide the necessary information and to allow for a better target-setting system for assessors.

Equality of opportunity

Contributory grade 3

32. MTL has played a successful role in an initiative organised through Liverpool Compact under which school students from disadvantaged backgrounds who are at risk of dropping out of school have worked towards units of an NVQ at level 1 in hairdressing. A significant number are expected to achieve the full NVQ in the next few weeks. Their attendance at training sessions at MTL's training centre is good, and their confidence and self-esteem have been raised. Several of the students have applied to join the apprenticeship scheme when they leave school, and the initiative has been well received by the schools. The school

students' achievements are celebrated at the annual show alongside those of MTL's other learners, and no distinction is made between them.

33. Learners display a satisfactory understanding of equality of opportunity. The topic is covered well at induction, raising learners' awareness of stereotyping. Dyslexia awareness sessions have been provided to combat learners' negative attitudes to those who receive additional support. Learners' understanding is reinforced at progress reviews, using a bank of questions to check awareness. Employers are made fully aware of learners' rights and responsibilities, and their equal opportunities policies are checked. MTL's equal opportunities policy is up to date and covers the essential aspects of the provision for staff and learners. Posters displayed in the training centre help promote social inclusiveness. There has been good promotion of employers' responsibilities to employees through a well-attended seminar. Learners are given a helpful workbook that contains information and activities, as well as clear instructions on how they should deal with bullying and harassment. It also includes guidelines for staff on how to deal with young people and vulnerable adults, and for staff and learners on how to seek further help. Most staff have taken part recently in an internal workshop on equal opportunities provided by the centre manager.

34. MTL does not have a clear strategy for equality of opportunity. It sets no targets and its action plan is insufficiently focused on improving recruitment from under-represented groups. There are no learners from minority ethnic backgrounds and too few men. MTL has only just begun to monitor the performance of different groups of learners, and the reports on this are insufficiently clear. The reports have been discussed at staff meetings, but there has been little in the way of judgements or actions arising. Until recently, the company's marketing materials did not show enough images of learners from traditionally under-represented groups to encourage them to apply. However, MTL is in the process of making links with all-boys' schools, and its new marketing material contains images that promote a socially inclusive learning environment.

Quality improvement

Contributory grade 3

35. MTL has developed a very clear, comprehensive and responsive quality assurance system. Its approach to quality improvement is systematic and well understood by staff. Action plans derived from the quality improvement procedures are carried out promptly and effectively. The quality assurance system includes a wide range of procedures relating to key aspects of the learners' experience. These include observations of teaching and learning, progress reviews, assessments and interviews, surveys of employers and learners, learners' induction feedback, internal verification, and internal audits. The system was introduced in January 2003. In particular, paperwork is checked frequently to ensure compliance with requirements, and staff are set deadlines by which to carry out tasks. Managers check that when internal verifiers set action plans for assessors, they are carried out. Brief action plans are produced from all staff meetings and followed up at the next meeting. Outcomes of learners' and employers' feedback are shared with learners. Actions taken in response to learners' concerns include the provision of smaller groups for off-the-job training, and an increase in the number of demonstrations by external companies. Employers are contacted with the response to individual issues raised in their feedback. The few complaints received are dealt with quickly and effectively.

36. Although the quality assurance system has been in place for over two years, there is still insufficient measurement and analysis of improvements. Learners' feedback is not

sufficiently analysed, and is not compared year by year to see whether actions have been effective. Targets have been set for improvement since 2003, but no checks have been made on whether these have been achieved. There were too few responses to the employers' survey in 2003 for it to be meaningful, and although the response rate improved in 2004, the results have not been analysed fully. Teaching and learning are not observed frequently enough, and the criteria for assessment are not sufficiently focused on learning. The observations carried out by staff who are not trained teachers are not always moderated. Improvements in the quality of teaching are not measured. Similarly, the number of non-compliances is not evaluated to ensure that the trend is downwards.

37. Internal verification is satisfactory. The process is systematic and thorough and meets with awarding body requirements. The feedback given to assessors is clear. Monthly internal verification meetings are used to improve the consistency of approach and to discuss how best to improve learners' individual progress. External verifiers' reports are discussed and actions planned and assigned.

38. The self-assessment process is honest, sufficiently self-critical, and generally accurate, although over-generous with grades. It has identified most of the same strengths and weaknesses as the inspection, although a few strengths listed are common practice. The process is inclusive and has actively involved all staff. Staff clearly understand their role in the process and recognise its importance in improving the provision. The self-assessment report was based on consideration of the developments that have taken place and on learners' and employers' feedback. The development plan is well constructed and realistic in its expectations.

AREAS OF LEARNING

Hairdressing & beauty therapy

Grade 3

Contributory areas:	Number of learners	Contributory grade
<i>Hairdressing</i> Apprenticeships for young people	100	3

39. MTL has 100 learners on hairdressing training programmes, of whom 87 are apprentices and 13 are advanced apprentices. The company also has a contract with Scientiam Limited to provide apprenticeships for 22 learners, and an advanced apprenticeship programme for one learner. Most learners are employed in hairdressing salons in the Merseyside area. Off-the-job training is provided at MTL's training centre near the centre of Liverpool. Learners attend for one day a week for practical and background knowledge training. They are assessed both at the training centre and in the workplace. There are 13 staff including five trainer/assessors, two qualified internal verifiers and one member of staff working towards an internal verifier award. Ninety per cent of the learners are women.

Hairdressing

Strengths

- well-developed practical hairdressing skills
- good standard of practical training
- good co-ordination of on- and off-the-job training
- detailed and particularly effective progress reviews
- good-quality workplaces

Weaknesses

- low achievement rates for apprenticeship frameworks
- insufficient updating of learners' long-term targets

Achievement and standards

40. Learners develop good hairdressing skills which they use effectively in their workplaces. Many learners can carry out tasks that are beyond what might be expected of them for the length of time they have been on programme, such as complicated colouring techniques. Learners carry out professional hairdressing consultations with clients and are sufficiently confident to suggest processes and services to improve the clients' hair. The standard of learners' portfolios is good. They provide a wide range of evidence and make good use of photographs.

41. Achievement rates for apprenticeship frameworks are poor. Of the apprentices who started in 2002-03, 22 per cent have achieved a full framework and 13 per cent are still in learning. Of those who started in 2003-04, 15 per cent have achieved their qualification and 41 per cent are still in learning. Those still in learning are on target to achieve within

the next few months. All learners in their second year of study have achieved their key skills qualification. On the advanced apprenticeship, only two learners have achieved frameworks since 2001-02, but the 13 still in learning are making good progress. As part of its retention strategy, MTL has employed a development and support officer to identify learners at risk of leaving, and provide support to help keep them on their programmes. MTL identified that most learners leave their programme during the first 12 weeks, and has introduced an eight-week taster period to give learners a clearer picture of hairdressing as a career. Early indications are that more learners are staying on. Of the 51 learners who have been retained, all but five have achieved their qualification.

The following tables show the achievement and retention rates available up to the time of the inspection.

LSC funded work-based learning																
Advanced apprenticeships	2004-05		2003-04		2002-03		2001-02									
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Number of starts	6	100	10	100	11	100	3	100								
Retained*	0	0	0	0	2	18	2	67								
Successfully completed	0	0	0	0	2	18	0	0								
Still in learning	5	83	5	50	3	27	0	0								

*retained learners are those who have stayed in learning for at least the planned duration of their training programmes, or have successfully completed their programme within the time allowed

LSC funded work-based learning																
Apprenticeships	2004-05		2003-04		2002-03		2001-02									
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Number of starts	59		86	100	55	100	39	100								
Retained*	0		13	15	12	22	22	56								
Successfully completed	0		13	15	12	22	19	49								
Still in learning	45		35	41	7	13	0	0								

*retained learners are those who have stayed in learning for at least the planned duration of their training programmes, or have successfully completed their programme within the time allowed

The quality of provision

42. The standard of practical training is good. Staff are well qualified and have good, current, commercial skills which they demonstrate effectively to learners. MTL's tutors have clear lesson plans that set out objectives for learners and evaluate them at the end of each session. Individual coaching is frequently used to help learners improve and develop their skills quickly. Tutors carefully select hairdressing models to match the needs of individual learners, maximising their assessment opportunities. Health and safety is continually reinforced with learners in practical sessions, and tutors take every opportunity to link learners' background knowledge to their practical work. Tutors create a safe working environment where learners can develop their skills with confidence. They are encouraging and supportive, challenging learners to make their own decisions about colour choices for clients. Learners are trained at MTL's training centre, which is modern and well equipped with a wide range of good-quality teaching materials to support learning. The training centre is on the third floor, but is accessible to people with restricted mobility by lift.

43. Co-ordination of on- and off-the-job training is good. Links with employers are used effectively to help plan training. An employers' pack clearly describes the employers' roles and responsibilities in the training of their learners. Employers are visited every month and given written targets to achieve in their practical training sessions that will help learners progress towards their qualification. Employers have a good understanding of their learners' qualifications and are aware of the assessment requirements for the NVQ and key skills. Employers often help learners to find clients for the more unusual hairdressing techniques so that they can be assessed on these.

44. Learners' progress reviews are comprehensive and very effective at ensuring that they and their employers have a clear view of what progress is being made. They take place monthly at the learners' workplaces, and are carried out by the development and support officer. During the progress review, learners are set challenging short-term targets, clearly linked to the requirements of the NVQ and having realistic timescales. Employers play an active role in the progress review and frequently contribute to the target-setting process. The development and support officer uses a series of questions to test learners' understanding of equality of opportunity and health and safety. Learners are confident in raising any concerns that they have about their work, and the development and support officer often intervenes to help them with problems. Learners who are identified as falling behind are given additional support to help them get back on target. Learners' progress is monitored effectively through the progress review process, which includes assessment planning. The development and support officer ensures that employers understand what is expected of them in terms of helping learners achieve their targets.

45. Learners have good workplaces that set high commercial standards. The salons use modern equipment and provide a wide range of hairdressing services. Learners have good opportunities to take part in additional training such as courses given by manufacturers of hairdressing products. Employers are committed to supporting their learners, and encourage them to become involved in additional activities such as competition work. Most salons have their own training programmes that help learners develop their hairdressing skills and confidence.

46. The induction process is satisfactory. Learners receive training in equality of opportunity, diversity, and health and safety, and are given advice and guidance on the assessment processes for their qualification, and on their employment in hairdressing. They have an initial assessment which identifies those who need help with their literacy and numeracy. Literacy and numeracy support is given in small groups or individually by MTL's staff using workbooks. The support is recorded systematically and evaluated every six months. Learners also receive individual support with their written work from MTL's staff, and those interviewed said that this had been helpful. Learners are on appropriate programmes.

47. Assessment is satisfactory and is carried out in accordance with awarding body policy. It is planned effectively and takes place both at MTL's training centre and in the learners' workplaces. Assessors visit learners in the workplace once a month, but learners can request additional assessments if they need to. Assessors often also visit on-the-job training sessions to ensure the quality of training and inform employers about the requirements of the qualification.

48. Learners' long-term targets are not kept up to date or linked to short-term goals. They

are set at the beginning of the programme, using the initial assessment and information on the learners' prior attainment. Learners understand clearly what they need to do to achieve their short-term targets, but do not see how these affect when they will achieve their qualification.

Leadership and management

49. Assessors have a clear understanding of their role and their responsibilities to learners, and are set targets for learners' achievements. Frequent meetings ensure that all staff know what progress is being made. Assessors meet the development and support officer every two weeks to discuss their learners and ensure that those who have been identified as falling behind with their assessments receive appropriate support. Staff are well qualified and take part in a range of continuous professional development activities. Extra staff have been recruited to support learners and increase the frequency of workplace assessment.

50. Internal verification is satisfactory. It is planned over a 12-month period and covers all learners and assessors, and a range of evidence. Assessors are observed frequently and given constructive feedback. Actions recommended by internal verifiers are recorded and followed up to ensure compliance. Assessors meet frequently to ensure a standardised approach to assessment. Learners who are not making sufficient progress with their assessments are identified through an effective monitoring system. They are supported and given the opportunity of more assessments, both at the training centre and in the workplace. New assessors are supported well and observed frequently to ensure that they meet MTL's standards. MTL is supporting tutors to achieve teaching qualifications, and in one case, a mentoring qualification.

51. The self-assessment report broadly identifies the strengths and weaknesses of the provision, but it overstates some of the strengths, and offers too little evidence for its judgements. Staff take part in the self-assessment process and recognise its importance in helping continuous improvement. The report is sufficiently self-critical and is accompanied by an appropriate development plan.

