

INSPECTION REPORT

Academy Education Ltd

29 September 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

Academy Education Ltd

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INSPECTION REPORT

DESCRIPTION OF THE PROVIDER

1. Academy Education (AE) is a limited company directed and owned by the group managing director, it offers both private training and government-funded work-based learning programmes. The work-based learning programmes have been offered since July 2000 and are funded by the central London Learning and Skills Council (LSC). Their day-to-day management is the responsibility of the managing director with the assistance of the group director of education. The two directors are supported by a deputy director of education, nine tutors and three administration staff, some of whom work part time.

2. All practical and background knowledge training takes place at the Alan d group's premises in the London Borough of Westminster, where AE shares reception facilities with the commercial hairdressing operation. Government-funded learners attend the training centre for one week in five. AE was inspected in December 2001, reinspected in January 2003, and subject to a quality monitoring visit in 2004.

3. The unemployment rate in August 2005 was 3.4 per cent for London, compared with a national average of 2.3 per cent. According to the 2001 census the proportion of the population in London from minority ethnic groups was 29 per cent, compared with the national average of 9 per cent.

OVERALL EFFECTIVENESS

Grade 3

4. **The overall effectiveness of the provision is satisfactory.** More specifically, leadership and management, quality improvement and training in retail and commercial enterprise are all satisfactory, but the organisation's approach to equality of opportunity is inadequate.

5. **The inspection team had some confidence in the reliability of the self-assessment process.** The self-assessment report produced in July 2005 takes account of learners' and staff views. However, AE only sought informal feedback from employers. The self-assessment report identifies most of the strengths in the provision, but overlooks many of its weaknesses and is insufficiently judgemental.

6. **The provider has demonstrated that it has sufficient capacity to make improvements.** There have been good improvements in retention and achievement rates, and the quality of teaching has improved since 2001 and is now good. However, the improvement in employers' involvement in training, which was identified at the reinspection and the quality monitoring visit, has not been sustained.

KEY CHALLENGES FOR ACADEMY EDUCATION LTD:

- continue to improve retention and achievement rates
- improve the frequency of visits to the workplace
- increase the frequency of work-based assessments
- improve the progress review process
- further develop access to additional support for literacy, numeracy and English language
- improve the understanding of equality of opportunity for learners and employers

GRADES

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

Leadership and management		3
Contributory grades:		
Equality of opportunity		4
Quality improvement		3

Retail and commercial enterprise			3
Contributory areas:	Number of learners	Contributory grade	
<i>Hairdressing</i>		3	
Apprenticeships for young people	122	3	

ABOUT THE INSPECTION

7. AE offers both ladies' and gentlemen's hairdressing programmes but the programme for gentlemen's hairdressing was too small to include in this inspection.

Number of inspectors	3
Number of inspection days	9
Number of learners interviewed	20
Number of staff interviewed	11
Number of employers interviewed	4
Number of locations/sites/learning centres visited	6

KEY FINDINGS

Achievements and standards

8. **Retention rates for apprentices are good.** They improved from 41 per cent in 2002-03 to 63 per cent in 2003-04. Eighty-seven per cent of the apprentices recruited in 2004-05, and all those who started in 2005-06 are still in learning. Achievement rates are satisfactory.

9. **Learners demonstrate very good practical skills** in their salon work with clients. They are able to work with clients confidently and without close supervision.

The quality of provision

Grades given to learning sessions

	Grade 1	Grade 2	Grade 3	Grade 4	Total
Retail and commercial enterprise	0	3	0	0	3
Total	0	3	0	0	3

10. **The training is good, both on and off the job.** Learners attend the training centre for one week in every five. The training week is planned to cover specific areas of hairdressing training such as cutting, setting and colouring, and it integrates background knowledge and practical work with clients. AE provides well-designed work packs for each area of training. Groups are small to ensure that learners receive individual help. The training is enhanced by the good environment and facilities available for sessions. Learners find the training enjoyable and useful.

11. **Most learners benefit from employment in high-quality salons**, some of them in very prestigious stores. They receive good training in their workplace and the opportunity to observe and assist well-qualified and respected hairdressing stylists.

12. There is **insufficient work-based assessment** and most assessment take place in the training centre. However, the provider's plans to improve this are at an advanced stage.

13. **Learners' progress reviews are inadequate.** Employers receive training reports but do not take a full role in reviews and are not involved in setting targets for learners' progress. Assessors make too few visits to the workplace to ensure that employers are involved in the learners' review process.

Leadership and management

14. **AE has a well-devised annual plan for its learning programmes.** The plan is flexible and enables learners who have difficulty in attending to move between different groups. It has a central role in enabling all staff to understand what teaching and learning will be carried out during the year and in each training week, so they can organise their activities accordingly. The plan is used to inform all employers and learners of the activities well in advance, so that learners' roles in the workplace can be covered while they are at the training centre. Employers understand the plan and most are able to arrange on-the-job training which complements that planned.

15. **The resources at the training centre are good.** The premises are large, welcoming and spacious. The training rooms outside the salon area provide a suitable environment for private and background knowledge study, and there is a well-resourced rest area. The training equipment is of a good commercial standard and includes a wide range of hair washing and drying facilities, enabling learners to have instant access to equipment whenever they need it. Staff are very experienced in working in large, prestigious, commercial salons and the tutor to learner ratio is high.

16. Since it was reinspected in 2003, **AE has introduced good new strategies to raise retention and achievement rates.** The retention rate is now good and the achievement rates satisfactory. A range of measures has been introduced to achieve this, including changes in the organisation of the learning and assessment processes, more thorough initial assessment, closer monitoring of learners' progress and better arrangements for finding work placements. The quality of teaching and training has also improved from satisfactory levels at the reinspection to good at this inspection.

17. **The co-ordination of on- and off-the-job training is poor.** Few work-based assessment visits have taken place in the past 12 months and there is little employer involvement in the quarterly review process. Training in salons is not taken into account when learners are assessed at the training centre.

18. **There is insufficient promotion of equality of opportunity.** Equality of opportunity is understood by the senior managers but not sufficiently reinforced or promoted to employers and learners. Staff are aware of their general responsibility to promote equal opportunities but most have not received any recent formal training.

19. The latest version of the self-assessment report was produced in July 2005. AE collected the staff views and feedback from learners' satisfaction questionnaires but did not gather employers' feedback. The self-assessment report was too descriptive. It identified the key strengths of the provision but failed to identify some of the key weaknesses.

20. AE conducts regular standardisation meetings with the teaching staff. The meetings have set agenda items, but there are no minutes or records of actions to be taken. There is

not enough observations of tutors conducting training. Observations of the assessment process in hairdressing are conducted by internal verifiers, but there are **no routine observations of teaching, learning, induction or progress reviews to identify areas for staff development.**

21. There are arrangements with a local college of further education to provide additional literacy, numeracy and language support for learners. Learners are provided with appropriate informal support by staff.

Leadership and management

Strengths

- well-planned learning programmes
- good training centre resources
- good strategies to improve retention and achievement rates

Weaknesses

- poor co-ordination of on- and off-the-job training
- insufficient promotion of equality of opportunity
- inadequate use of observations of teaching processes

Retail and commercial enterprise

Hairdressing

Grade 3

Strengths

- good retention rates
- very good practical skills demonstrated by learners
- good training
- many good work placements

Weaknesses

- inadequate progress reviews
- insufficient work-based assessment
- incomplete arrangements for additional learning support

WHAT LEARNERS LIKE ABOUT ACADEMY EDUCATION LTD:

- the good equipment in the training centre
- the supportive and helpful staff
- the good handbooks
- the good teaching
- the individual training

WHAT LEARNERS THINK ACADEMY EDUCATION LTD COULD IMPROVE:

- the assessments at work
- the number of visits at work
- the amount of teaching for cutting and blow drying

DETAILED INSPECTION FINDINGS

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

Grade 3

Strengths

- well-planned learning programmes
- good training centre resources
- good strategies to improve retention and achievement rates

Weaknesses

- poor co-ordination of on- and off-the-job training
- insufficient promotion of equality of opportunity
- inadequate use of observations of teaching processes

22. AE has a well-devised an annual plan for its learning programmes which is produced in discussion with all staff members. The plan is flexible and enables learners who have difficulty in attending at a particular time the opportunity to move between groups. The plan has a central role in enabling all staff to understand what teaching and learning will take place during the year and the training period, and enable them to plan their activities accordingly. The plan is used to inform all employers and learners of planned activities well in advance, enabling them to arrange cover for learners while they are at the training centre. Employers understand the plan and most are able to arrange on-the-job training to complement that in the training plan. This advance notice and planning is very much welcomed by employers and learners.

23. AE's premises are close to a major central London shopping area and include a commercial salon at street level and a training centre. The premises are large, welcoming and spacious. The training area is divided into individual sections that each represent a hairdressing salon, enabling learners to receive training in a commercial setting. Additional training rooms outside the salon area provide a suitable environment for private and background knowledge study, and there is a well-resourced rest area. The equipment is of a good commercial standard and includes a wide range of hair washing and drying facilities, enabling learners to have instant access to equipment whenever they need it. Staff are very experienced in working in large, prestigious, commercial salons, and the tutor to learner ratio is high, sometimes one to one, and always at least one tutor to eight learners.

24. The business planning processes are satisfactory. AE produced its most recent three-year business plan in April 2005. The business plan is revised annually, and sets out the company's vision. However, not all key aspects of the provision have targets set for improvement.

25. The staff appraisal system is satisfactory. Staff take part in a self-assessment and review every six months. Each staff member must have a minimum of 30 hours' continuous professional development each year. Other training and development is provided to staff in response to individual needs.

26. AE has devised a formal strategy to support learners' literacy, numeracy and English

language skills, but it is at an early stage of implementation. There are new arrangements with a local college of further education to provide additional support for learners.

27. On- and off-the-job training are poorly co-ordinated. Few work-based assessment visits have taken place in the past 12 months, and there is little employer involvement in the quarterly review process. Training carried out in salons is not taken into account when learners are assessed at the training centre. One employer visited by inspectors had no initial suitability check by AE, and no workplace visits in the past six months.

Equality of opportunity

Contributory grade 4

28. There is insufficient promotion of equality of opportunity. Equality of opportunity is understood by senior managers but is not sufficiently reinforced or promoted to employers and learners. Although staff are aware of their general responsibility to promote equal opportunities, many are uncertain exactly what this means. Learners have a poor awareness of the appeals process, but they do have a basic understanding of what to do if they encounter discrimination, bullying, victimisation or harassment. All learners receive a copy of the company's equal opportunities policy during their induction and are given a brief description of equality of opportunity. However, there is no written training material to explain the policy or break it down into easy-to-understand language. Staff have not received initial training in equality of opportunity. This has been recognised by AE and it is currently trying to source local training for its staff.

29. The equality of opportunity policy requires compliance but does not identify how this will be promoted. There are omissions in equal opportunities practice and procedures. AE has recognised the need to target under-represented priority groups more effectively but has no formal action plan. There is little evidence of recruitment practices successfully challenging stereotypes. Recruitment materials include a statement that AE is an equality of opportunity employer, and AE has a good video which contains a number of images of members of under-represented groups.

30. AE gives a copy of its equality of opportunity policy to each employer, but few could produce it. Equality of opportunity is not promoted in the workplace and there are no workplace reviews to promote equality of opportunity to learners. Employers are unsure whether they use their own policy or whether they use AE's. Progress reviews in the training centre do include equality of opportunity questions, but are not used to check learners' understanding in any depth. Some learners have experienced equality of opportunity problems in the workplace which have not been identified by the employer or by AE staff.

31. Wheelchair access is good and there is a lift to the lower training floor.

Quality improvement

Contributory grade 3

32. AE has a comprehensive range of documented systems and procedures for most learning processes. The procedures are reviewed regularly and there is an audit system to check completion and implementation of the main policies.

33. Since the reinspection in 2003, AE has significantly raised retention rates and they are now good. Achievement rates are satisfactory. A range of measures has been introduced to achieve this, including changes in the organisation of the learning and assessment processes, more thorough initial assessment, closer monitoring of learners' progress and

better arrangements for finding work placements for learners. The quality of teaching and training has also improved from satisfactory at the reinspection to good at this inspection.

34. The collection and analysis of learner feedback is satisfactory. Learners are required to complete a questionnaire at the end of each week of their off-the-job training. The directors analyse the results and set targets for improvement. Specific issues arising from the questionnaires are discussed at the weekly staff team meetings.

35. The use of management information systems is satisfactory. Managers routinely analyse detailed reports to determine the rates of retention, achievement and learners' progress.

36. The latest version of the self-assessment report was produced in July 2005. The self-assessment process included views of staff and feedback from learners. Employers' feedback was not routinely collected. The report covers most of the key aspects of the Common Inspection Framework, but omits retention data, and the organisation's approach to the development of literacy, numeracy and English language skills and the five main outcomes of the Children Act 2004. The self-assessment report identified the key strengths in the provision but failed to identify some of the key weaknesses.

37. The systems for internal verification in hairdressing are satisfactory. Internal verification is planned and decisions are well documented. There are also plans at an advanced stage for an additional staff member to qualify as a further internal verifier. However, the internal verification for key skills is unsatisfactory. There has been no internal verification for six months and there has not been an external verification visit conducted by the awarding body for two and half years. The organisation holds regular standardisation meetings for the teaching staff. The meetings have set agenda items but no record is kept of the minutes or actions to be taken.

38. The observation of tutors is inadequate. Internal verifiers observe the assessment process in hairdressing, but there are no routine observations of teaching, learning, induction or progress reviews. Observations are not used to manage staff performance.

AREAS OF LEARNING

Retail and commercial enterprise

Grade 3

Contributory areas:	Number of learners	Contributory grade
Hairdressing Apprenticeships for young people	122	3 3

39. AE provides training in ladies' and gentlemen's hairdressing in and around London. Vocational training takes place on the job in 64 hairdressing salons, and key skills and off-the-job training takes place at AE's training centre in central London. Learners attend the training centre for one week in five. There are 122 learners on hairdressing training programmes, all of them following apprenticeships and all employed. Twenty-two per cent are from minority ethnic groups and 9 per cent are men. The apprenticeship programme is planned to last 25 months. There are 15 educators and ancillary staff as well as the managing director and director of education.

Hairdressing

Grade 3

Strengths

- good retention rates
- very good practical skills demonstrated by learners
- good training
- many good work placements

Weaknesses

- inadequate progress reviews
- insufficient work-based assessment
- incomplete arrangements for additional learning support

Achievement and standards

40. Eighty-seven per cent of apprentices who started in 2004-05 are still in learning, and retention rates improved from 41 per cent in 2002-03 to 63 per cent in 2003-04. Achievement rates are now satisfactory. Many learners had been making slow progress, but since August 2005, 26 of those who started in 2001-02 and 2002-03 have achieved their framework. The great improvement in key skills achievement has contributed to this. All the learners are now progressing satisfactorily.

41. Learners demonstrate very good practical skills in their salon work with clients. They work confidently with clients without close supervision. Some learners work in prestigious city-centre establishments and already have a full list of clients. A few learners achieve the level 2 national vocational qualification in 18 months and move quickly to become valued staff in good-quality commercial salons.

42. Portfolios of evidence are generally well presented and organised. They are of a satisfactory standard and contain the appropriate range of evidence. Learners clearly understand the portfolio and what it should contain.

43. Learners' progress is satisfactory, although no targets are set at progress reviews.

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

LSC funded work-based learning																
Apprenticeships	2005-06		2004-05		2003-04		2002-03		2001-02							
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Number of starts	10		79		71	100	73	100	47	100						
Retained*	0		0		45	63	30	41	20	43						
Successfully completed	0		0		9	13	23	32	20	43						
Still in learning	10		69		36	51	7	10	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

44. There is good training, both on and off the job. All three learning sessions observed by inspectors were judged to be good. The training is planned well to meet the needs of the learners and employers. Learners attend the training centre for one week in every five, and cover specific areas of hairdressing such as cutting, setting and colouring. Employers receive a copy of the scheme of work and appreciate the planning of the programme. The training week integrates background knowledge with practical work on clients. The training is complemented by well-designed and produced work packs for each topic. These ensure that training is consistent for all groups and tutors follow clear guidelines. There is a maximum of eight learners to a group, but groups are normally smaller than this. The small groups ensure that learners receive individual help and, in some cases, individual tuition in practical sessions. Training is enhanced by the good environment and facilities available for sessions. Learners find the training enjoyable and useful.

45. Most learners benefit from working in good-quality salons, some of them in very prestigious stores. Learners receive good training in their workplace and have the opportunity to observe and assist well-qualified and respected hair stylists. Employers are also very satisfied with the training offered by AE.

46. There is insufficient work-based assessment. There are enough clients for assessment opportunities during training sessions, and most assessments take place in the training centre. Only seven assessments have been carried out in the workplace this year by AE's staff and six have been carried out by employers. The employers are not subject to internal verification. The provider has recognised this problem and has made plans to deal with it.

47. Learners have a clear review of the progress they make during the off-the-job training weeks, and the results are communicated to their employers. However, not all learners have a workplace progress review, and if they do, it does not fully involve their employer and is not used to set targets or action points. Assessors make little use of the workplace review to reinforce equality of opportunity. In its present form, the review makes no positive contribution to progress. There are insufficient visits to the workplace to ensure

that employers are involved in the training process.

48. Initial assessments have identified the need for literacy and numeracy support for some learners. This is not offered formally, but learners are helped during background knowledge sessions by supportive hairdressing staff.

Leadership and management

49. The new director of education has worked well with staff to improve and plan the training carried out at the training centre. Training staff are enthusiastic and committed. There are staff meetings to discuss training issues. Resources to support learning are good. Staff are appropriately qualified and experienced in the sector.

50. There is little promotion of equal opportunities either to learners or to employers. Equality of opportunity is mentioned at induction but is not reinforced during the rest of the programme. Most of the learners are women.

51. Quality improvements are satisfactory. Internal verification of hairdressing is now satisfactory and meets awarding body requirements. However, there has been no internal verification of key skills in the past six months, and no recent visit by an external verifier. Learners' views are sought and the results analysed, but AE has not formally requested employers' views.

