

# INSPECTION REPORT

## **FNTC Training and Consultancy Ltd**

**09 December 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
- **learnirect** 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.
- adult information, advice and guidance services (**nextstep**)

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

## FNTC Training and Consultancy Ltd

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## INSPECTION REPORT

### DESCRIPTION OF THE PROVIDER

1. FNTC Training and Consultancy Ltd (FNTC) was founded in January 2000 to provide apprenticeship training in early years care and education for nursery practitioners in the Southampton and New Forest area. In December 2002, FNTC expanded its role to provide training in administration, customer service and management. FNTC contracts with Hampshire and the Isle of Wight Learning and Skills Council (LSC). The company's headquarters and main training centre is in Totton, near Southampton, although training rooms and facilities are also available at Fawley. FNTC has a further office and training facility in Newport on the Isle of Wight. The company employs 26 training, administration and support staff.

2. At the last census, the population of Southampton was 217,445, of whom over 90 per cent were white, and 50 per cent men. At that time the population of the Isle of Wight was 132,731, of whom 99 per cent were white, and 48 per cent were men. In September 2005 the LSC reported that youth unemployment in Hampshire and the Isle of Wight averaged 1.4 per cent. The unemployment figure for Southampton unitary authority was higher at 2.1 per cent.

### OVERALL EFFECTIVENESS

**Grade 2**

3. **The overall effectiveness of the provision is good.** Training in health, public services and care, and business administration and law is good, as are leadership and management, quality improvement, and the management of equality of opportunity and diversity.

4. **The inspection team was broadly confident in the reliability of the self-assessment process.** FNTC's latest self-assessment report, published in October 2005, was its fourth. The report drew upon a good range of evidence from staff, learners, employers and partner organisations. It was suitably self-critical and generally accurate, although it did not sufficiently consider differences between the contributory areas of business administration training. Inspectors agreed with most of the strengths and weaknesses identified.

5. **The provider has demonstrated that it is in a good position to make improvements.** FNTC has made good progress since it was inspected in 2001, improving the quality of provision during a period of extensive growth. Good quality improvement arrangements are in place, although the full effect of some of these cannot yet be judged.

### KEY CHALLENGES FOR FNTC TRAINING AND CONSULTANCY LTD:

- improve the achievement rates of some apprenticeship frameworks
- continue to support new assessors to develop their assessment practice
- improve access to the Totton learning centre for learners with limited mobility
- continue the improvement in retention rates
- maintain the quality of provision as part of sustainable growth

## GRADES

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

<b>Leadership and management</b>		<b>2</b>
Contributory grades:		
Equality of opportunity		2
Quality improvement		2

<b>Health, public services and care</b>			<b>2</b>
<b>Contributory areas:</b>	<b>Number of learners</b>	<b>Contributory grade</b>	
<i>Early years</i>		<b>2</b>	
Apprenticeships for young people	145	2	

<b>Business administration and law</b>			<b>2</b>
<b>Contributory areas:</b>	<b>Number of learners</b>	<b>Contributory grade</b>	
<i>Administration</i>		<b>2</b>	
Apprenticeships for young people	11	2	
<i>Business management</i>		<b>2</b>	
Apprenticeships for young people	20	2	
<i>Customer service</i>		<b>2</b>	
Apprenticeships for young people	16	2	

## ABOUT THE INSPECTION

6. FNTC offers training in early years care and education to 145 learners, 54 of whom are enrolled on the programme-led pathway initiative. A further 47 learners are being trained on a variety of business administration programmes. FNTC was inspected previously by the ALI in September 2001. At that time the organisation was based in Fawley and only had 37 early years learners. The single area of learning, and leadership and management, were all graded satisfactory. In planning the current inspection, consideration was given to the previous inspection report, FNTC's current self-assessment report published in October 2005, and to retention and achievement data supplied by the company.

Number of inspectors	4
Number of inspection days	16
Number of learners interviewed	58
Number of staff interviewed	23
Number of employers interviewed	12
Number of locations/sites/learning centres visited	10

## KEY FINDINGS

### Achievements and standards

7. **Early years care and education learners develop particularly good practical and interpersonal skills.** They show a clear understanding of the value of play and the importance of hygiene and safety, and become very competent at carrying out a range of childcare and education activities. Learners develop high levels of confidence in new situations such as handling babies safely and talking to adults at work.
8. Most learners produce good written evidence of their early years knowledge. They set out written work neatly and use a range of appropriate presentation methods.
9. **The retention rate for advanced apprentices on early years programmes, and the achievement rate for learners taking national vocational qualifications (NVQs) are both good.** In 2003-04 the retention rate for NVQ learners was 84 per cent and all those who completed the course gained the qualification.
10. **The retention rate is good on business administration apprenticeship programmes.** From 2002-03 to 2004-05, 84 per cent of learners were retained or are still in learning. The retention rate on advanced apprenticeships has improved and is now satisfactory.
11. **Early years learners are making slow progress towards achieving their apprenticeship frameworks.** In 2002-03 and 2003-04, nine of the 41 advanced apprentices and 14 of the 38 apprentices who started training achieved their frameworks within the planned time.
12. **In business administration, learners develop a wide range of personal and job-related skills.** Employers value the knowledge that learners acquire and their

development of organisational and presentation skills.

13. **Business administration learners' work is of a good standard.** Portfolios are well organised and contain a broad range of evidence.

14. **The retention rate in business administration is good.** In 2002-03 and 2003-04, an average of 80 per cent of apprentices were retained. Of the 2004-05 intake, 31 per cent have been retained, and a further 50 per cent are still in learning. All 11 learners who started team leader programmes over the past 18 months remain in learning.

15. Overall, achievement rates in business administration are satisfactory.

16. **Many of the business administration apprentices who completed their awards over the past three years made slow progress.** Nine of the 17 successful administration apprentices and 11 of the 19 successful customer service apprentices completed after their planned end dates.

17. **There are low levels of achievement on advanced apprenticeship programmes in business administration.** FNTC acknowledges this as a weakness in its self-assessment report and has put in place appropriate actions to deal with it.

### The quality of provision

18. **Teaching and learning are good in early years programmes.** None of the three teaching sessions observed was unsatisfactory. Arrangements for off-the-job training are particularly well planned and managed.

19. Tutors' written feedback on marked assignments recognises positive aspects of the work, while effectively identifying how learners can improve. However, learning is not always reinforced and checked.

20. The teaching of key skills is related appropriately to the workplace. Learners feel well supported in key skills. Most attend weekly classes, and some have support from their tutor at their workplace.

21. **There is a very good working relationship between FNTC, Connexions, and local nursery employers' networks.** Training in behavioural management is often provided by members of the network. Programmes meet the needs of learners. Flexible arrangements are made for employed apprentices to attend training on Saturdays, or in the evening, to accommodate the needs of employers.

22. Guidance and support for learners are satisfactory. Assessors visit learners every six to eight weeks to review their progress and discuss aspects of the training. Support for learners with literacy and numeracy needs is satisfactory.

23. **Target dates are frequently exceeded** and a small number of learners are not assessed in their workplaces sufficiently early in the training. Some newly appointed assessors do not make the most efficient use of evidence.

24. **In business administration, programme planning is particularly effective.** FNTC's



staff have established a productive rapport with learners and their mentors. They work closely together to ensure that programmes reflect the needs of learners and the demands of their work roles.

25. **FNTC's staff adopt a very flexible and supportive approach to training in business administration.** Apprentices are offered the opportunity to attend carefully planned and well-taught training sessions that support the technical certificate. Sessions are run at a time and place to maximise attendance.

26. The resources used both at FNTC's own training centre and in the workplace are of an appropriate standard. If learners are unable to attend off-the-job training sessions, assessors provide informal training and coaching in the workplace.

27. Initial assessment is satisfactory. Learners complete a range of tests and exercises at the start of their programme. Interviews and application forms are used to identify proxy qualifications and concessions, and a further questionnaire is used to identify preferred learning styles.

28. The quality of discussions during progress reviews is good and encourages learners to make progress. Assessors are prepared to challenge poor performance. Little reference is made during reviews to any pastoral support needs that the learner may have.

### **Leadership and management**

29. **Leadership and management at FNTC are good.** Since 2001, the company has expanded its provision considerably. Throughout this period of growth the provision has improved.

30. There is **good development of training to meet the needs of employers and learners.** Staff communicate well with employers and learners to devise training activities in the workplace which reflect learners' roles and the requirements of the qualifications.

31. FNTC works particularly effectively with employers to help learners. Learning is reinforced appropriately through regular meetings.

32. **Human resources and development arrangements are managed well.** Tutors and managers have a particularly wide range of qualifications and expertise, and there has been a significant investment in new staff to support growth .

33. FNTC has a **strong commitment to supporting staff training, both for the benefit of the business and for personal development,** and staff make use of this. All staff have clear and detailed job descriptions and fully understand their roles and responsibilities.

34. FNTC has a clear and well-articulated mission statement, and core values which are shared by staff and are well promoted to learners. Senior managers work well together and set a clear direction for widening participation in training. This is reinforced through the setting of realistic overall targets.

35. **In early years, FNTC has introduced a well-managed programme-led pathway** which provides work experience and background knowledge for young learners. Many learners

progress to employment.

36. **FNTC has taken a long time to deal with the slow progress of some learners**, and in some cases with their low achievement rates. The situation has changed in the past year and clear strategies have now been put in place to remedy this weakness.

37. Since FNTC was inspected in 2001, it has recruited more assessors. Initial assessment is more comprehensive and additional support needs are quickly identified and provided for. Key skills are now integrated well with NVQ work.

38. There is **good use of management information to support quality improvement**. FNTC communicates well with its staff, learners, employers and partner organisations. Learners' evaluations of teaching sessions are used well and learner groups elect representatives who provide a good source of qualitative feedback. All staff are actively involved in the self-assessment process, and they contribute to the grades awarded to the areas of learning and leadership and management. Employers and Connexions staff are also consulted, either at self-assessment report workshops or through questionnaires.

39. Performance data is collected, effectively analysed by senior managers, and used to improve the provision. At an operational level, staff are now well aware of retention rates and individual learners' progress towards achievement of NVQs and frameworks.

40. The self-assessment report was generally accurate, although it did not sufficiently focus on the differences between the contributory areas in business administration.

41. Some aspects of the quality assurance arrangements have not yet been fully implemented. Staff carry out learners' progress reviews, but when the review records are insufficiently detailed, this is not being systematically followed up. A few early years learners have not been allocated assessors quickly enough. Learners' portfolios do not contain standard documents for recording assessment plans.

42. **Arrangements to promote equality of opportunity and diversity are managed well**. Equality of opportunity is one of the company's four core values, and all staff have a strong commitment to its implementation.

43. The company's equal opportunities development plan includes clear targets for widening participation. FNTC has been successful in, for instance, increasing the number of men who enrol for the early years care apprenticeship.

44. There are particularly effective arrangements to eliminate oppressive behaviour and harassment, and these are consistently applied. Complaints are investigated quickly and thoroughly, taking account of the rights of all parties. Learners are aware of the arrangements, and feel confident about taking up any matters of concern.

45. Staff receive appropriate training in managing equality of opportunity. In the past year, two training events have been held, the latter bringing together all staff for a particularly well-received one-day seminar.

46. Support for learners' literacy and numeracy needs is satisfactory. Initial assessment is effective, and learners' identified needs are recorded appropriately. Learners appreciate

the support they receive from staff.

47. There is limited access for learners with mobility difficulties at the main training centre in Totton. The building has recently been refurbished, and is bright and welcoming. However, accommodation is on several levels, often with narrow corridors and numerous stairs. The company recognises this weakness and has employed consultants to advise on possible adaptation.

48. The company has made some investment in adaptive technology, providing speech recognition software, and portable computers which staff can use to support learners at their workplace.

## **Leadership and management**

### **Strengths**

- good development of training to meet employers' and learners' needs
- well-managed human resources and development arrangements
- well-managed arrangements to promote equality of opportunity and diversity
- particularly effective arrangements to eliminate oppressive behaviour and harassment
- good use of information to support quality improvement

### **Weaknesses**

- delayed action to deal with learners' slow progress
- poor access to the Totton training centre

## **Health, public services and care**

### ***Early years***

***Grade 2***

#### *Strengths*

- particularly good skills development
- good teaching and learning
- good staff development and training to support expanding provision

#### *Weaknesses*

- slow progress towards achieving frameworks

## **Business administration and law**

### *Strengths*

- good skills development
- particularly effective programme planning
- very flexible and supportive approach to learning

*Weaknesses*

- low levels of framework achievement on advanced apprenticeships

## **WHAT LEARNERS LIKE ABOUT FNTC TRAINING AND CONSULTANCY LTD:**

- the training sessions
- the individual support in class
- 'I now really understand customer service in my job role'
- 'staff are always available on the telephone'
- 'it feels like a second family'
- 'being able to use my training to improve my business'

## **WHAT LEARNERS THINK FNTC TRAINING AND CONSULTANCY LTD COULD IMPROVE:**

- the number of evening classes for full-time learners who are on their way to completing their training
- the consistency between assessors
- the amount of training for early years learners in meeting the needs of children with additional needs

## DETAILED INSPECTION FINDINGS

### LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

Grade 2

#### Strengths

- good development of training to meet employers' and learners' needs
- well-managed human resources and development arrangements
- well-managed arrangements to promote equality of opportunity and diversity
- particularly effective arrangements to eliminate oppressive behaviour and harassment
- good use of information to support quality improvement

#### Weaknesses

- delayed action to deal with learners' slow progress
- poor access to the Totton training centre

49. Leadership and management at FNTC are good. Since it was last inspected in October 2001, the company has expanded its portfolio of programmes, considerably increased the number of learners and staff, and opened two additional offices and training centres. Throughout this period of expansion the quality of provision has improved. At the 2001 inspection, early years care and education was the only area of learning, and there were 37 learners. The provision was judged to be satisfactory. There are now 127 learners on early years programmes and the programmes are judged to be good. Five separate programmes in business administration and law have been introduced, which are also judged to be good, and which support 52 learners. The company continues to run a nursery in Fawley which offers work placements for apprentices and learners on the programme-led pathway initiative.

50. There is good development of training to meet the needs of employers and learners. Staff communicate well with employers and learners, working with them to devise training activities in the workplace which reflect learners' roles and the requirements of the qualifications. Employers are very knowledgeable about the NVQs and demonstrate a good understanding of assessment processes. Many have used the company before and strongly encourage their employees to take part in training. FNTC works particularly effectively with employers to help learners select appropriate NVQ optional modules. Staff reinforce learning appropriately through regular meetings with learners, and employers allow learners sufficient time to work on their assignments and portfolios. Learners gain good skills, and most progress well in their jobs.

51. FNTC's human resources and development arrangements are managed well. Tutors and managers have a particularly wide range of qualifications and expertise, and there has been significant investment in new staff to support growth. Many staff have degrees and diplomas in business management, and staff working with early years learners have wide experience of working in nurseries, or teaching on care programmes in colleges, or at private training providers. FNTC has a strong commitment to supporting staff, both for the benefit of the business and for their personal development, and staff take up the

opportunities they are offered. All staff have clear and detailed job descriptions and fully understand their roles and responsibilities. New staff are provided with a comprehensive induction programme and are assigned a mentor to help them through the initial stages of working with the company. The centre director carries out appropriate annual appraisal of each member of staff, and additional reviews every six months. Staff are encouraged to gain key skills qualifications and some assessors are taking qualifications in information and communication technology to help them support learners. The staff development plan is clearly linked to the business plan and is updated annually.

52. FNTC has a clear and well-articulated mission statement, and core values which are shared by staff and are well promoted to learners. A learning agreement, which contains details of what FNTC expects of learners, and what it is committed to providing, is displayed in prominent positions around the training centres. Senior managers work well together and set a clear direction for widening participation in training. This is reinforced through the setting of realistic overall targets for increasing retention and achievement rates. Other targets are in place for staff development and training. Recently, increasing the number of assessors and providing support for those in training has been seen as a particular priority. Good use is made of the company intranet to ensure that staff on the Isle of Wight and at Fawley have access to information about targets and progress. Members of the senior management team visit the centres weekly to support training staff and ensure that they are able to contribute to the overall business planning process.

53. FNTC has introduced a well-managed programme-led pathway in early years care which provides work experience and background knowledge for young learners. The Fawley nursery is used well to provide work experience and employment opportunities for these learners, and particularly as a means of developing and reinforcing the need for punctuality and regular attendance. Many learners progress to employment and apprenticeships. The working relationship between FNTC, Connexions and local nursery employers' networks is very good. Training in behavioural management is often provided by members of the network.

54. The management of support for learners with literacy and numeracy needs is satisfactory. Learners' additional needs are identified through a comprehensive initial assessment process, and effective use is made of resources funded by the LSC to support their needs. Learners are not assessed for dyslexia, but all staff are provided with a guide to identifying learners who may have dyslexia, and they provide informal support which is valued by the learners receiving it.

55. FNTC has taken a long time to deal with the slow progress, and to some extent the low achievement rates, of some learners. Since 2001, FNTC's key priority has been the building of capacity. There has been extensive staff recruitment, and new systems have been introduced to support quality improvement. This has coincided with recent changes to apprenticeship frameworks, and the company's introduction of new programmes in business administration. The situation has changed in the past year and now clear strategies have been put in place to improve rates of progress. More assessors have been recruited. Initial assessment is more comprehensive and additional support needs are quickly identified and provided for. Key skills are now well integrated with NVQ work. In all programmes there is a rapid response by staff to poor attendance. Retention rates have improved both on early years and business programmes. The full effect of these strategies on achievement rates has yet to be felt.

**Equality of opportunity****Contributory grade 2**

56. Arrangements to promote equality of opportunity and diversity are managed well. Equality of opportunity is one of the company's four core values, and all staff have a strong commitment to its implementation. FNTC has developed comprehensive and effective policies and procedures which are understood and accepted both by staff and learners. For example, the published arrangements for assessment appeals are particularly thorough, with detail provided on how, if necessary, appeals can be taken to the awarding body. The language used in some of the paperwork for learners is, however, too complex. The company has recognised the need for clarity and has begun to rewrite some induction material. Procedures are promoted well. The training centres display well-designed posters in plain English, which clearly identify learners' rights and responsibilities. Suitable reference to equality of opportunity is made in promotional leaflets and advertising. FNTC frequently attends careers events arranged by Connexions and local schools. On these occasions, current learners attend and act as role models for prospective learners. The company has clear targets for widening participation as part of its equal opportunities development plan, and has been successful in, for instance, increasing the number of men who enrol for the early years care apprenticeship. In 2003-04 only one man was enrolled, but by 2005-06 this had increased to seven.

57. FNTC has particularly effective arrangements to eliminate oppressive behaviour and harassment. There is a clear understanding throughout the company of the policies and procedures which must be followed, and these are consistently applied. There have been few complaints in the past three years, but when they have occurred, the company has investigated them in a timely and thorough way which has taken account of the rights of all parties. Learners are aware of the arrangements, and feel confident about using them. They see FNTC's training centres, and their workplaces as safe places to learn. The company adequately monitors equality of opportunity in the workplace through learners' progress reviews, although the recording of these is superficial. There is good reinforcement of learners' understanding of their rights and responsibilities as employees, through well-conceived classroom projects, and as part of portfolio-building.

58. Initial information and guidance, and recruitment procedures, are satisfactory. There are good links with Connexions, and the company makes effective use of press advertising. Enquiries are dealt with promptly and learners appreciate the friendly and supportive approach of staff when they first visit the centre for interview and auditing of their numeracy and literacy skills. FNTC has good contacts with local work-placement providers. Many apprentices are placed with employers within days of joining the programmes.

59. Staff receive appropriate training in managing equality of opportunity. In the past year, two training events have been held, the latter bringing together all staff for a particularly well-received one-day seminar. Support for learners' literacy and numeracy needs is satisfactory. Effective initial assessment is carried out, and the needs identified are recorded appropriately. Learners appreciate the support they receive from staff. A recently appointed learning support assistant is used well at the Totton centre. There is, however, no learning support assistant for learners at the Isle of Wight centre.

60. Access for people with limited mobility is poor at the main training centre in Totton. The building has recently been refurbished, and is bright and welcoming. However, the accommodation is on several levels with a number of narrow corridors and numerous stairs. The company recognises this weakness and has employed consultants to advise on



possible adaptations. Some alternative training space with level access is available at the Fawley nursery, but the company recognises that this is in need of refurbishment. There is suitable lift access to training rooms at the Isle of Wight centre. The company has made some investment in adaptive technology, providing speech recognition software, and portable computers which staff can use to support learners at their workplace. Workbooks and learning support materials are available in formats suitable for learners with dyslexia.

## Quality improvement

## Contributory grade 2

61. FNTC has made many improvements to its training provision in the past four years. All the key weaknesses identified at the previous inspection have been dealt with effectively, and the company has developed a good, self-critical culture which is now supporting improvement well. The quality of early years programmes has improved from satisfactory to good. The business administration provision introduced in 2002-03 has benefited from many of the improvements made, and is good.

62. There is good use of information to support quality improvement. FNTC communicates well with its staff, learners, employers and partner organisations, and makes good use of the information it collects. The company uses a detailed schedule of teaching session observations which includes induction, teaching and learning, and assessment practice. The data from the observations is used effectively as part of the staff's performance development meetings. Learners' evaluations of teaching sessions are used well. They are summarised and monitored at senior management level and used in the planning of future learning sessions and observations. All learner groups elect representatives who provide a good source of qualitative feedback, as well as representing the views of learners on other matters of interest to them. FNTC is responsive to this feedback. For example, when learners requested a kitchen at the Totton learning centre, one was provided. Most learners have a high level of satisfaction with FNTC and praise the support from tutors and assessors. All staff are actively involved in the self-assessment process, and they contribute to the grades awarded to the areas of learning and to leadership and management. Employers and Connexions staff are also consulted, either at self-assessment workshops or by completing questionnaires.

63. FNTC has a comprehensive quality monitoring calendar which ensures that key quality activities are monitored and targets are set for improvement. A well-conceived post-inspection action plan was fully integrated with the business planning process. Senior managers review the training provision regularly and set targets for improvement which include, for example, stepped outcomes for retention rates, participation rates and resources. The targets are described in a performance development plan, which has clear, measurable outcomes with defined responsibilities and timescales. Outcomes are monitored regularly at management meetings and the information is used to devise further actions for improvement. Performance data is collected, analysed effectively by senior managers, and used to plan improvements. At an operational level, staff are now well aware of retention rates and individual learners' progress.

64. FNTC has a comprehensive quality improvement manual. Detailed arrangements for assuring the quality of training are clearly written and referenced. These are supported by clear work practices which provide staff with guidelines, for example for completing reviews, and carrying out assessment and verification. Internal verification is sound and assessor and standardisation meetings are used as a valuable way of reinforcing the need for good assessment practice. Quality auditing is satisfactory, but focuses mainly on the

completion of documents and learners' files, in order to comply with contract requirements.

65. The self-assessment process is a well-established part of the planning cycle, and the annual self-assessment report provides a clear and honest picture of the provision. The current self-assessment report, the fourth, is generally accurate, although it does not sufficiently focus on the differences between the contributory areas of learning in business administration. Inspectors found most of the same strengths and weaknesses as FNTC, although the company graded its provision lower than the inspection team in early years and leadership and management.

66. Some of the quality assurance arrangements that have been introduced have not yet been fully implemented. For example, records of learners' progress reviews are insufficiently detailed, but this is not being systematically identified and followed up. In many cases the records contain insufficient measurable targets, and they are often limited to notes on learners' progress with NVQs. The self-assessment report identified this weakness but it has not yet been fully dealt with. A few learners on the early years programme have not been allocated assessors quickly enough. Learners' portfolios do not contain standardised documents for recording assessment plans, and some induction documents are incomplete. For example, the names and signatures of internal verification staff and witnesses are sometimes omitted. Some learners are unsure when they will receive accreditation for the NVQ units they have completed.

## AREAS OF LEARNING

### Health, public services and care

### Grade 2

Contributory areas:	Number of learners	Contributory grade
<i>Early years</i>		<b>2</b>
Apprenticeships for young people	145	2

67. FNTC has 145 learners on early years programmes. Ninety-seven are apprentices working towards NVQs at level 2 and the certificate in early years practice. Of these, 54 are taking part in the programme-led pathway initiative before entering employment and full framework training. There are 48 advanced apprentices. In 2003-04, the company took part in a one-year adult entitlement project with 21 learners working towards NVQs at level 2, and four working towards level 3. Learners are usually referred through Connexions or directly by their employers. Others are recruited at information events. All advanced apprentices are employed. Training in background knowledge and key skills is offered at two centres, where apprentices attend for up to three days each week, and advanced apprentices attend once a month. Work placements include crèches, day nurseries and schools. Assessors review learners' progress every six to eight weeks or more frequently if the learner needs additional support.

#### *Early years*

#### **Grade 2**

#### *Strengths*

- particularly good skills development
- good teaching and learning
- good staff development and training to support expanding provision

#### *Weaknesses*

- slow progress towards achieving frameworks

### **Achievement and standards**

68. Learners develop particularly good practical and interpersonal skills. Apprentices show a clear understanding of the value of play and the importance of hygiene and safety when working with babies and young children. They become very competent at carrying out a range of activities and managing behaviour. Learners develop high levels of confidence in new situations, such as handling babies safely and talking to adults at work. Advanced apprentices acquire appropriate supervisory skills, includes completing children's records, observing accurately and adapting activities to meet the needs of all children.

69. Most learners produce good standards of written evidence for their NVQ, technical certificates and diplomas. They set out written work neatly and use a range of appropriate presentation methods.

70. Retention and achievement rates for learners on NVQ-only programmes are good. In

2003-04 the retention rate was 84 per cent and all those who completed the course gained the qualification. The retention rate is also good for apprentices. From 2002-03 to 2004-05, 74 per cent of advanced apprentices and 70 per cent of apprentices were retained until the planned end of their programme, or are still in learning.

71. Progress towards achieving frameworks is, however, slow. In the two years from 2002-03 to 2003-04, only nine of the 41 advanced apprentices and 14 of the 38 apprentices who started training achieved their frameworks within the planned time. A further 18 advanced apprentices and five apprentices are still in learning. FNTC is aware of this weakness, and has invested appropriate resources in employing and training new assessors. Recently some learners have been assigned two assessors to enable them to complete their portfolios. It is too early to judge the full effectiveness of these arrangements.

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

<b>LSC funded work-based learning</b>																	
<b>Advanced apprenticeships</b>	<b>2005-06</b>		<b>2004-05</b>		<b>2003-04</b>		<b>2002-03</b>										
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	
Number of starts	5		27	100	26	100	15	100									
Retained*	0		0	0	4	15	11	73									
Successfully completed	0		0	0	2	8	7	47									
Still in learning	5		25	93	15	58	3	20									

\*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

<b>LSC funded work-based learning</b>																	
<b>Apprenticeships</b>	<b>2005-06</b>		<b>2004-05</b>		<b>2003-04</b>		<b>2002-03</b>										
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	
Number of starts	32		87	100	24	100	14	100									
Retained*	0		15	17	14	58	9	64									
Successfully completed	0		8	9	7	29	7	50									
Still in learning	32		60	69	5	21	0	100									

\*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

<b>LSC funded work-based learning</b>																	
<b>NVQ Training</b>	<b>2004-05</b>		<b>2003-04</b>														
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	
Number of starts	1		25	100													
Retained*	1		21	84													
Successfully completed	1		21	84													
Still in learning	0		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**

72. Teaching and learning are good. Tutors and learners are enthusiastic and committed to their work. Arrangements for off-the-job training are particularly well planned and managed. Tutors plan and prepare sessions carefully, using well-designed resources and a wide range of practical equipment to promote learning. They make clear links between theory and practice, and learners provide relevant examples from their workplaces. Tutors use video and presentation software very effectively. They explain clearly the content of sessions and what work is needed. Tutors design an appropriate range of activities including practical sessions such as cooking. They identify where the same evidence can be used efficiently for the NVQ, and the technical certificate or diploma. Their written feedback on marked assignments recognises positive aspects of the learners' work, while effectively identifying how they can improve. Learning objectives are not recorded sufficiently clearly, however, and sometimes learning is only reinforced and checked at a superficial level. One training room is cramped and the arrangement of furniture in a second room makes it difficult for learners to easily share information with each other.

73. The development of key skills is related appropriately to the workplace. Apprentices collect relevant information about the children they work with and their environments, and apply calculations to this data for application of number assignments. Learners feel well supported in key skills. Most attend weekly classes and some are supported by the tutor in their workplaces. At the Totton training centre a member of staff provides specialist support for learners with additional learning needs. Tutors make good use of this resource by effectively planning the level and type of intervention that would most benefit individuals.

74. Programmes meet the needs of learners. Training sessions take place on two sites on three days each week. Flexible arrangements are made for employed apprentices to attend training on Saturdays or in the evenings to accommodate the needs of employers. Managers take care to place learners needing greater personal support in workplaces that can offer this. However, a minority of learners are experiencing difficulty in finding full-time work placements when their training periods finish.

75. Guidance and support for learners are satisfactory. Assessors visit learners every six to eight weeks to review their progress and discuss the training. Employers contribute by commenting on the learners' development. Target dates are frequently exceeded, however, and some learners are not assessed in their workplaces sufficiently early in the training. Some apprentices who have changed assessors have been confused about what they have achieved. Some newly appointed assessors do not make the most efficient use of evidence and ask for more evidence than is necessary to show competence and knowledge. FNTC is aware of these weaknesses and is resolving them through suitable training for assessors and additional support for learners.

## **Leadership and management**

76. FNTC provides good professional development for staff to support its expanding provision. The company shows a strong commitment to identifying training needs and helping staff to achieve relevant qualifications and experience. Several recently qualified assessors have been employed by the company as the number of learners has increased. Other members of staff are developing skills and working towards qualifications in teaching,

and tutors meet regularly to share good practice and discuss ideas. There is further training and development for assessors at standardisation and team meetings. For example, one tutor has provided examples of interesting activities and resources for staff to use when developing learners' key skills. An experienced assessor is helping a recently qualified colleague to refine her practice, particularly in assessing learners' evidence for NVQs at level 3.

77. Staff are well qualified for their roles and are given enough time to carry out assessments. Training rooms are comfortable, although at one site the room is cramped for the number of learners. There are sufficient computers for learners to use when researching or completing written work. Centre staff have improved their communication with employers, who now feel well informed of learners' progress and assessment opportunities.

78. The management of quality improvement at programme level is sound. Managers monitor training rigorously. They observe teaching and write detailed reports that clearly identify good points and areas for development. Internal verifiers sample completed units and use these to identify aspects of assessment practice that need to improve. The process does not, however, always identify slow progress sufficiently early. Discussions and activities at monthly standardisation meetings continue to support the assessors in training and those who have recently qualified. All staff contributed to the self-assessment report and accurately identified areas for development. Appropriate action has been taken, such as employing more assessors and increasing the level of internal verification.

79. Equality and diversity are effectively reinforced in training sessions and in workplaces. Tutors frequently refer in their sessions to meeting the needs of children from all backgrounds and levels of ability. They provide children's books and other resources that encourage apprentices to value diversity. Learners show a good understanding of the complex issues linked to equality of opportunity. However, there is too little focused teaching or discussion during reviews to develop learners' knowledge and skills to meet children's individual needs.

**Business administration and law****Grade 2**

<b>Contributory areas:</b>	<b>Number of learners</b>	<b>Contributory grade</b>
<b>Administration</b> Apprenticeships for young people	11	2
<b>Business management</b> Apprenticeships for young people	20	2
<b>Customer service</b> Apprenticeships for young people	16	2

80. There are 47 learners working towards qualifications in business administration. The total is made up of 16 in customer service and contact centres, 10 in management, 10 in team leading, and 11 in administration. Sixteen learners are advanced apprentices, and 31 are apprentices. The length of the learners' programmes is planned to reflect their needs and employment circumstances. All learners are employed and are supported in the workplace by an experienced colleague who acts as their learning mentor. Learners are visited by an assessor from FNTC every two weeks for on-the-job coaching and assessment. Progress is reviewed every six weeks. Additional support is provided, where appropriate, by a learning support adviser. All learners are offered the opportunity to attend off-the-job training sessions to meet technical certificate requirements.

*Strengths*

- good skills development
- particularly effective programme planning
- very flexible and supportive approach to learning

*Weaknesses*

- low levels of framework achievement on advanced apprenticeships

**Achievement and standards**

81. Learners develop a wide range of personal and job-related skills while working towards their qualifications. Employers value the knowledge that learners acquire, and can demonstrate how this has helped improve their effectiveness in the workplace. The development of organisational and presentation skills is particularly commendable. Learners' work is of a good standard. Portfolios are well organised and contain a broad range of evidence.

82. The retention rate in business administration has improved and is good. In the two years 2002-03 and 2003-04, an average of 80 per cent of learners were retained. Of the learners who started programmes in 2004-05, 31 per cent have been retained and a further 50 per cent are still in learning. All 11 learners who started team leader programmes over the past 18 months remain in learning.

83. Overall, achievement rates are satisfactory at 61 per cent for administration learners and 50 per cent for customer service learners. However, many of the apprentices who have achieved their awards over the past three years made slow progress. Nine of the 17

successful administration apprentices and 11 of the 19 successful customer service apprentices completed after their planned end dates. FNTC has recognised this weakness and is working with learners to increase the pace at which they work through their awards. The achievement rate for learners working towards NVQs was good in 2002-03 and 2003-04. In customer service, 65 per cent of leavers completed their awards. There are no learners on NVQ-only programmes at present

84. There are low levels of framework achievement on advanced apprenticeship programmes. Thirty-five advanced apprentices enrolled on management programmes between 2002-03 and 2004-05. Only four have completed their frameworks and 12 are still in learning. Six of the learners, however, completed their NVQs. The company acknowledges this as a weakness in its self-assessment report and has put in place actions to improve framework achievement.

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

<b>LSC funded work-based learning</b>																	
<b>Advanced apprenticeships</b>	<b>2005-06</b>		<b>2004-05</b>		<b>2003-04</b>		<b>2002-03</b>										
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	
Number of starts	4		11	100	14	100	10										
Retained*	0		1	9	5	36	1										
Successfully completed	0		1	9	3	21	0										
Still in learning	4		7	64	4	29	1										

\*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

<b>LSC funded work-based learning</b>																	
<b>Apprenticeships</b>	<b>2005-06</b>		<b>2004-05</b>		<b>2003-04</b>		<b>2002-03</b>										
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	
Number of starts	15		26	100	44	100	18	100									
Retained*	0		8	31	34	77	15	83									
Successfully completed	0		3	12	17	39	12	67									
Still in learning	13		13	50	5	11	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

<b>LSC funded work-based learning</b>																	
<b>NVQ Training</b>	<b>2003-04</b>		<b>2002-03</b>														
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	
Number of starts	25	100	7	100													
Retained*	20	80	3	43													
Successfully completed	18	72	3	43													
Still in learning	0	0	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

85. Programme planning is particularly effective. FNTC's staff have established a productive rapport with learners and their mentors. They work closely to ensure that programmes reflect both the needs of learners and the demands of their work roles. Assessors use their detailed understanding of programme requirements to support learners as they select optional units. They work well with mentors, using a skill scan to identify assessment opportunities and to ensure that learners have the opportunity to fully meet programme requirements. Mentors are asked to identify where learners need to develop skills and understanding to improve their effectiveness at work. The result is incorporated into the individual learning plan, along with the outcomes of initial assessment.

86. FNTC's staff adopt a very flexible and supportive approach to training. Apprentices are offered the opportunity to attend training sessions for the technical certificate. Sessions are carefully planned and are taught by occupationally competent and experienced trainers. Sessions are run at a time and place to maximise attendance. Management training sessions are offered on Saturdays as many apprentices experience difficulty attending during the week. If employers have several learners working towards the same award, they are offered the opportunity to host training sessions on their own premises so that learners need not travel to the training centre. FNTC has run combined training sessions for several employers in the same area at a mutually convenient site. Last year, eight customer service apprentices who benefited from such an arrangement all successfully completed their technical certificates. Managers' observations of learning sessions, carried out as part of the company's quality assurance arrangements, show the standard of teaching to be satisfactory or better. Training resources, both at FNTC's own training centre and in the workplace, are of an appropriate standard. If learners are unable to attend off-the-job training sessions, assessors provide informal training and coaching sessions in the workplace. Assessors visit learners every two weeks, offering them a good level of support that focuses on motivating them to progress.

87. Initial assessment is satisfactory. Learners complete a range of tests and exercises at the start of their programme. These are used to establish their literacy, numeracy, and key skills ability levels, and to plan where they may need additional support. Interviews and application forms are used to identify proxy qualifications and concessions, and a further questionnaire is used to identify preferred learning styles. The results are communicated to learners and recorded on their individual learning plan alongside any planned support. More specialised support, for needs such as dyslexia, are identified in discussion with learners. Induction is used to provide learners with an appropriate structured overview of the programme requirements.

88. Assessors appropriately use the first observed assessment to further their understanding of learners' work roles and their working environment. This shapes future assessment planning. Assessment practice is sound. Assessors use a range of assessment methods, and encourage learners to work with them to organise their evidence. Learners take more responsibility for cross-referencing evidence and identifying further assessment opportunities as they gain in experience.

89. Reviews are scheduled to take place every six weeks. In most cases they take place in satisfactory locations and involve the learners' mentor or line manager. The review form has recently been altered and now provides a good tool for recording and reviewing

targets. Reviews are used to discuss all aspects of the learners' programme and to set clear short-term objectives. The quality of discussions during reviews is good and encourages learners to make progress. Assessors are prepared to challenge poor performance. There is little reference during reviews to learners' pastoral support needs. In its self-assessment report the company identified both the review process and target-setting as areas for development. Work has been carried out to deal with these weaknesses, and both now reflect satisfactory practice.

### **Leadership and management**

90. FNTC's staff have worked together to identify the weaknesses that have contributed towards low levels of framework achievement. They have altered, for example, the way in which key skills are introduced and taught to learners, and have reviewed the teaching for the technical certificate. The work of the apprenticeship co-ordinator has increased the focus on managing individual learners' progress and achievement. Communication between team members is effective. All staff have job descriptions that outline their roles and responsibilities. Each has a professional development plan. Arrangements for internal verification are sound, and clear feedback is provided to the assessors.

