

INSPECTION REPORT

Nottingham Hairdressing Training Agency

08 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*

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INSPECTION REPORT

DESCRIPTION OF THE PROVIDER

1. Nottingham Hairdressing Training Agency (NHTA) is a limited company that was established in 1983, originally as a partnership. It is privately owned and based in Nottingham. It has two sites, a training centre situated in the centre of the city and an administrative centre on the outskirts, which is also used for induction and some training and assessment activities. It provides work-based learning in Nottingham and the surrounding areas for 200 apprentices and advanced apprentices who are working towards national vocational qualifications (NVQs) in hairdressing. It also provides vocational training for 14 to 16 year old school pupils in NVQ hairdressing at level 1. Work-based learning for young people is funded through a contract with Nottinghamshire Learning and Skills Council.

2. The senior management team consists of two directors who are responsible for the strategic direction and day-to-day running of the company. The company employs 14 full-time and 12 part-time staff, who are responsible for the training and assessment, progress reviews, learner support, internal verification, recruitment, retention and achievement, and the administration of the company.

OVERALL EFFECTIVENESS

Grade 2

3. **The overall effectiveness of the provision is good.** NHTA's leadership and management are good, as are its arrangements for equality of opportunity and quality improvement. The hairdressing programme, as part of retail and commercial enterprise, is also good.

4. **The inspection team had a high degree of confidence in the reliability of the self-assessment process.** It is well managed, thorough and mostly inclusive. The current self-assessment report is NHTA's sixth. The findings of the inspection closely matched the self-assessment report. Inspectors found the self-assessment process and the development plan to be critical and very effective in bringing about improvements in the provision.

5. **The provider has demonstrated that it is in a good position to make improvements.** Since the previous inspection in 2001 and the reinspection in 2003, NHTA has continued to raise its retention and achievement rates, particularly on the apprenticeship programme. It has had less success on the advanced apprenticeship programme. Weaknesses identified at the reinspection have been tackled and are no longer weaknesses. The effective support arrangements and improvement strategies in teaching and learning have had a significant effect on the quality of provision. The provision has improved since the reinspection.

KEY CHALLENGES FOR NOTTINGHAM HAIRDRESSING TRAINING AGENCY:

- maintain high standards in teaching, training and learning

NOTTINGHAM HAIRDRESSING TRAINING AGENCY

- maintain good standards of support for learners
- improve and further develop strategies to raise achievement rates
- improve the ongoing promotion of equality of opportunity to learners

GRADES

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

Leadership and management		2
Contributory grades:		
Equality of opportunity		2
Quality improvement		2

Retail and commercial enterprise			2
Contributory areas:	Number of learners	Contributory grade	
<i>Hairdressing</i>			2
Apprenticeships for young people	200		2

ABOUT THE INSPECTION

6. The inspection reported on and graded hairdressing, which is the only area of learning that NHTA offers. The hairdressing provision that is offered to year 9 school pupils is not included in the inspection. Inspection activity took place during a single week.

Number of inspectors	3
Number of inspection days	12
Number of learners interviewed	20
Number of staff interviewed	19
Number of employers interviewed	11
Number of locations/sites/learning centres visited	2
Number of partners/external agencies interviewed	2

KEY FINDINGS

Achievements and standards

7. **Learners achieve good professional standards of hairdressing.** They develop their practical skills well and have a good understanding of background knowledge. They quickly develop the standards expected in commercial hairdressing and work to commercial timings.

8. Retention and achievement rates for apprentices are satisfactory. Since 2004, retention rates have improved significantly, with the introduction of new support initiatives, and 77 per cent of learners are still in learning. For the advanced apprentices, trends in retention show improvement with in-year retention rising from 59 per cent in 2004 to 75 per cent in 2005.

9. **Achievement rates for advanced apprentices are poor.** In 2002-03, none of the learners completed the framework. Learners are making slow progress towards achieving their qualifications, but there is some early indication of improvements.

The quality of provision

Grades given to learning sessions

	Grade 1	Grade 2	Grade 3	Grade 4	Total
Retail and commercial enterprise	1	6	0	1	8
Total	1	6	0	1	8

10. **Teaching and learning are particularly good.** Of the eight training sessions observed, 88 per cent were good or better. Teaching is well planned and takes good account of learners' needs and their preferred ways of learning. Tutors are knowledgeable about their subject. They give clear explanations during demonstrations and encourage learners to develop their own ideas and to persevere through difficulties. They challenge the learners, and give appropriate help and support. Tutors effectively develop learners' key skills by using interesting and stimulating teaching methods and learning materials.

11. **The review process is thorough and fully involves the learner and the employer.** Strong emphasis is placed on linking the on-the-job activities to the target-setting process. Details of targets achieved are confirmed, and future targets and action plans for assessment are detailed. Good discussion takes place on health and safety and equal opportunities and any concerns are dealt with in a sensitive way.

12. **There is particularly good specialist support for learners who have additional learning needs.** All learners who need additional support are given help in practical hairdressing and background knowledge from specialist tutors. Learners speak very highly of the numeracy and literacy support they receive which helps them with their written work.

13. **Practical assessment opportunities are not frequent enough** to allow learners to progress through their programme at an appropriate rate. In some cases, learners who have been on programme for over a year have only achieved one unit of their NVQ. Where learners have assessors in their workplace, progress is better. NHTA is currently training and developing more salon assessors.

Leadership and management

14. **The management arrangements for meeting learners' additional learning needs are good.** Learners have a thorough initial assessment during their induction. Seventy-three per cent of current learners receive additional learning support which is provided by NHTA's skills for life team. Skills for life is the government's strategy on training in literacy,

numeracy and the use of language. Tutors provide support in the training centres and at the learners' work placements. There are detailed individual learning plans for each learner, with clear and measurable targets and timescales. The company has a good working relationship with Nottinghamshire Dyslexia Association (NDA), which provides initial screening and diagnostic assessment for NHTA learners. In the current year, 20 learners are receiving specialist individual support for dyslexia.

15. Management initiatives to improve teaching and learning have been particularly effective. Support and training for tutors to improve their teaching is good. The effective deployment of the staff team ensures that learners have very good support in practical sessions and during background knowledge training from hairdressing and skills for life tutors. Learning resources have improved.

16. Senior managers provide clear strategic direction. Internal communications are good. Staff are fully aware of the values of the organisation. New staff receive a thorough induction. Senior managers are approachable and supportive. Staff have a good understanding of their roles and responsibilities as detailed in the staff handbook. NHTA staff meet once a month to consider developments in the company and to discuss recruitment, retention and achievement rates.

17. Health and safety monitoring is well managed. The company's placement officers carry out annual health and safety checks at each work placement and at the training centres. Reports clearly identify problems and an action plan is agreed with the employer and regularly monitored.

18. Monitoring and evaluation of the quality of learning sessions is good. The company recently implemented a new procedure for the observation of teaching and it has significantly improved the sessions.

19. NHTA has a comprehensive quality improvement strategy which clearly sets out how the company will quality assure the learners' experience. Regular checks are carried out to measure compliance with the systems and procedures. Documents are reviewed and updated on a regular basis.

20. There is a thorough and supportive internal verification process. Internal verification quality assures the assessment process and supports assessors in improving assessment practice. However, the system is very complicated.

21. Senior managers promote a critical culture and understand the company's main strengths and weaknesses well. Weaknesses which were identified at previous inspections have been resolved or incorporated into the company's current self-assessment report and development plan. The self-assessment report identified many of the key strengths and weaknesses found by inspectors. Inspectors gave the same grade for all aspects of the provision as those in the self-assessment report.

22. NHTA has put in place good measures to meet the diverse needs of learners. Good links with NDA have ensured that support and help are provided for learners. Through established links with the Nottingham training network, all staff and some specifically identified learners have participated in a mentoring programme. Advanced apprentices are now acting as mentors for learners who are at risk of leaving the programme early. Very

effective screening at recruitment ensures a responsive and productive approach to learners' needs. Lesson planning and preparation places a strong emphasis on equality of access to learning.

23. **NHTA makes good use of a range of data** to measure the performance of different groups.

24. Training and development are satisfactory. Training and development needs are identified through the appraisal system. The outcomes of lesson observations and internal verification are prioritised to meet the objectives in the three-year development plan.

25. Management of resources is satisfactory. Learners are placed in a wide range of well-equipped salons across Nottinghamshire. NHTA's training centre is well equipped and provides an appropriate learning environment. There is a suitable range and number of clients for the learners to practise on and be assessed. Learners are trained by well-qualified staff.

26. Monitoring of retention and achievement is satisfactory. Managers receive regular reports on recruitment, retention and achievement rates. Staff have developed and implemented strategies to raise the retention and achievement rates for advanced apprentices. It is too early to judge the effectiveness of these initiatives.

27. Access to the first floor of the training centre is by stairs only. NHTA publicises to clients and learners that it will provide training and hairdressing services at alternative venues when required.

28. **There is insufficient recording of quality improvement actions.** Feedback is sought from learners and employers through an annual questionnaire. Actions from surveys are not formally recorded and there is insufficient analysis of whether the provision is continuously improving. The observation of training is thorough, but grades given to learning sessions are not moderated to ensure consistency and accuracy.

29. **The ongoing promotion of equal opportunities to learners is insufficient.** Learners' understanding of equality and diversity is weak. They are given information on equal opportunities policies at induction, but the language is overly complex for some learners. NHTA recognises that there are insufficient training materials for tutors to use and is currently improving this resource.

Leadership and management

Strengths

- good management arrangements for meeting learners' additional learning needs
- good measures to meet the diverse needs of learners
- good use of equal opportunities data to measure performance of different groups
- good monitoring and evaluation of the quality of learning sessions

Weaknesses

- insufficient ongoing promotion of equal opportunities

- insufficient recording of quality improvement actions

Retail and commercial enterprise

Hairdressing

Grade 2

Strengths

- good development of learners' practical hairdressing skills
- particularly good teaching and learning
- thorough review process
- very good support for learners
- particularly effective management initiatives to raise standards of training

Weaknesses

- poor achievement rates for advanced apprentices
- insufficient practical assessment

WHAT LEARNERS LIKE ABOUT NOTTINGHAM HAIRDRESSING TRAINING AGENCY:

- 'tutors have time for you'
- 'they make sure you understand what you are doing'
- good training
- friendly and approachable staff
- the city centre location of the training centre
- the good atmosphere at the training centre
- 'there are always plenty of tutors to help us'
- the hairdressing demonstrations
- 'if I have a problem, there is always someone I can talk to'
- 'it's so not like school'

WHAT LEARNERS THINK NOTTINGHAM HAIRDRESSING TRAINING AGENCY COULD IMPROVE:

- 'I would like to attend the training centre every week'
- 'I want to practise more on clients not head blocks'
- 'I feel like a cleaner in my placement salon'
- the hairdressing products in the training centre
- 'it's difficult to concentrate on theory when it's in the afternoon'
- the pay
- 'plan level 3 better, I study on my day off'

DETAILED INSPECTION FINDINGS

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

Grade 2

Strengths

- good management arrangements for meeting learners' additional learning needs
- good measures to meet the diverse needs of learners
- good use of equal opportunities data to measure performance of different groups
- good monitoring and evaluation of the quality of learning sessions

Weaknesses

- insufficient ongoing promotion of equal opportunities
- insufficient recording of quality improvement actions

30. Management arrangements for meeting learners' additional learning needs are good. Learners have a thorough initial assessment during their induction and those who have additional learning needs receive a diagnostic assessment to identify the type of support they need. Seventy-three per cent of current learners receive additional learning support from the skills for life team. Tutors provide support in the training centres and at the learners' work placement. There are detailed individual learning plans for each learner, with clear and measurable targets and timescales. Learners' progress against these targets is reviewed every three months through a further diagnostic assessment. The company has a good working relationship with NDA, which provides initial screening and diagnostic assessment. In the current year, 20 learners are receiving specialist support for dyslexia. The retention rate for learners who receive support is good.

31. NHTA's three-year development plan clearly identifies the company's main strengths, weakness, opportunities and actions for improvement. Senior managers provide clear strategic direction and internal communications are good. Staff are fully aware of the values of the organisation, and new staff receive a thorough induction. Senior managers are approachable and supportive. Staff have a good understanding of their roles and responsibilities as detailed in the staff handbook. Staff meet once a month to consider developments in the company and to discuss recruitment, retention and achievement rates. Meetings are carefully recorded and action points, timescales and responsibilities are clearly identified. Staff attendance at these meetings is good.

32. Training and development are satisfactory. Staff receive financial support or time off during working hours to attend professional updating events or other training related to their work role. Managers maintain a comprehensive professional development log and evaluate staff feedback on training they have attended. Staff are appraised by their line manager every year. Training and development needs are identified through the appraisal system, the outcomes of lesson observations and internal verification, and are prioritised to meet the objectives set out in the three-year development plan. The company has recently been awarded a national quality standard, which recognises a provider for valuing its people.

33. Management of resources is satisfactory. Learners are placed in a wide range of well-equipped salons across Nottinghamshire. NHTA's training centre is well equipped and provides an appropriate learning environment. Assessors and internal verifiers are occupationally competent and have the appropriate qualifications. Most tutors have a recognised teaching qualification and the remainder are working towards one. The skills for life co-ordinator is qualified to teach basic skills. Other members of the team are qualified teachers, but do not have a specific qualification to teach basic skills.

34. Monitoring of retention and achievement is satisfactory. Managers receive regular reports on learner recruitment, retention and achievement rates. Staff have developed and implemented strategies to raise the retention and achievement rates for advanced apprentices, but it is too early to judge the effectiveness of these initiatives. A system for monitoring individual unit achievement has recently been developed. However, this system does not currently include key skills and technical certificates.

35. Health and safety monitoring is well managed. The company's placement officers carry out health and safety checks at each work placement and at the training centres. Reports clearly identify if the employer is not meeting health and safety requirements and an action plan is agreed with the employer. The action plan is monitored regularly until the improvements have been implemented and the employer meets all the criteria.

Equality of opportunity

Contributory grade 2

36 NHTA has good measures to meet the diverse needs of learners. A high proportion of learners have additional learning needs. Good links with NDA have ensured that support and help is provided. Through established links with the Nottingham training network, all staff and some specifically identified learners have participated in a mentoring programme. Advanced apprentices are now acting as mentors for learners who are at risk of leaving the programme early. Established partnership arrangements with the Djanogly City Technology College and Academy have encouraged more learners from minority groups to participate in hairdressing programmes. Currently, 11 learners are from minority ethnic groups. NHTA has worked productively with an Iranian female apprentice and her employer to meet her cultural needs. For example, it has negotiated time off on some Saturdays so that she may attend Arabic school. Very effective screening at recruitment ensures a responsive and productive approach to meet learners' needs. Lesson planning and preparation places a strong emphasis on equality of access to learning.

37. NHTA makes good use of a range of data to measure performance of different groups. In 2003, NHTA identified that men were generally under-performing and it arranged additional support strategies. Recent analysis shows improvements in the retention and achievement rates of male learners. Review of the performance of learners with additional learning needs is ongoing and is used as a measure to review strategies which have been implemented to improve teaching and learning.

38. The first floor of the training centre is accessed by stairs only. NHTA publicises to clients and learners that they will provide training and hairdressing services at alternative venues when required. Through regular health and safety checks, NHTA ensures that employers understand their responsibilities under the Disability Discrimination Act 1995.

39. The ongoing promotion of equal opportunities to learners is insufficient. Learners have

a basic understanding of equal opportunities, their rights and responsibilities and how to make a complaint. They are given information on NHTA's equal opportunities policies at induction, but the language is overly complex for some learners. Learners' understanding of equality is checked during progress reviews through clear and supported discussion. NHTA's staff respond quickly and effectively to learners when problems are identified. However, there is no ongoing training to further develop learners' understanding of equality and diversity. NHTA has recognised that there are insufficient training materials for tutors to present information in a useful and interesting way and is currently improving this resource.

Quality improvement

Contributory grade 2

40. Monitoring and evaluation of the quality of learning sessions is good. The company has implemented a new procedure for the observation of learning and this has been successful in significantly improving the quality of learning sessions. There is comprehensive and detailed paperwork to support the observation process. Observation records are detailed and clearly identify strengths and weaknesses. Tutors receive useful and constructive feedback on how they can improve, which they value. Training needs are identified and recorded. Thirty-six sessions have taken place this year and more are planned. A useful and detailed report summarises the main findings. The report distinguishes observation grades for background knowledge sessions, practical training, key skills lessons and individual support sessions, to enable patterns to be identified. The report also identifies particular teaching and learning practices which are outstanding, good, satisfactory or inadequate. This information is shared during team meetings.

41. NHTA has a comprehensive quality improvement strategy which clearly sets out how the company will quality assure the learners' experience. Regular checks are carried out to measure compliance with the systems and procedures. Documents are reviewed and updated on a regular basis.

42. Internal verification arrangements are thorough and meet awarding body standards. There is an appropriate internal verification sampling plan to ensure that all assessors and units are covered. However, the process is overly complex. Internal verifiers give appropriate advice and guidance to assessors. They meet regularly to standardise practice. Internal verifiers provide good additional help and guidance for new assessors.

43. The self-assessment process is mostly inclusive. Staff and learners contribute to the judgements in the report. However, there is insufficient involvement of employers. Senior managers promote a critical culture. They understand the company's main strengths and weaknesses well. Weaknesses identified during previous inspections have been resolved or incorporated into the company's current self-assessment report and development plan. The company is making good progress in responding to these weaknesses. The self-assessment report identified most of the key strengths and weaknesses found by inspectors. Inspectors gave the same grade for all aspects of the provision as those in the self-assessment report.

44. There is insufficient recording of quality improvement actions. Learner and employer feedback is gained through an annual questionnaire, the results are summarised and appropriate actions are carried out to resolve problems. However, these actions are not formally recorded and there is insufficient analysis to measure improvement. The observation of training is thorough, but grades given to learning sessions are not moderated to ensure consistency and accuracy. The learners' induction is not quality assured as part

of the lesson observation process.

AREAS OF LEARNING

Retail and commercial enterprise

Grade 2

Contributory areas:	Number of learners	Contributory grade
Hairdressing		2
Apprenticeships for young people	200	2

45. NHTA has 200 learners, of whom 156 are apprentices and 44 are advanced apprentices. There are 15 men and 11 learners from minority ethnic groups. Seventy-three per cent of learners have additional learning needs. All learners are employed and work in one of 123 salons in Nottingham and the surrounding area. Off-the-job training is provided fortnightly at the training centre in Nottingham city centre. Learners have progress reviews every 12 weeks. They have an initial assessment and diagnostic testing to identify the most appropriate programme for them. Key skills sessions are supported by four skills for life tutors. Nine hairdressing tutors carry out training and assessment, supported by three salon-based assessors. A further 10 are working towards the assessor award. Three internal verifiers quality assure the assessment process.

Hairdressing

Grade 2

Strengths

- good development of learners' practical hairdressing skills
- particularly good teaching and learning
- thorough review process
- very good support for learners
- particularly effective management initiatives to raise standards of training

Weaknesses

- poor achievement rates for advanced apprentices
- insufficient practical assessment

Achievement and standards

46. Learners achieve good professional standards. They develop their practical skills well and have a good understanding of background knowledge. They quickly develop the standards expected in commercial hairdressing and work to commercial timings. They put appropriate emphasis on health and safety and client care and use technical terms correctly and confidently. Learners receive clear and concise feedback from staff. The quality of learners' written work is satisfactory.

47. Retention and achievement rates of apprentices are satisfactory. Of the learners who have started since 2003, 63 per cent have achieved their qualification or are still in learning. Since 2004, retention rates have improved significantly to 77 per cent with the introduction of new support initiatives. For advanced apprentices, trends in retention show

improvement with in-year retention rising from 59 per cent in 2004 to 75 per cent in 2005.

48. Achievement rates for advanced apprentices are poor. In 2002-03, none of the learners completed the framework. Learners are making slow progress towards achieving their qualifications. However, in 2005, the programme has been radically redesigned to better meet the needs of the learners and employers. There is some early indication of improvements. For example, recent results for the external diploma examination show that all learners have passed the examination with credits or distinctions. One learner has completed the framework, and four are on target to complete by February 2006.

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

LSC funded work-based learning																
Advanced apprenticeships	2005-06		2004-05		2003-04		2002-03		2001-02		2000-01					
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Number of starts	28		32		29		17	100	10	100	30	100				
Retained*	0		0		3		3	18	3	30	9	30				
Successfully completed	0		0		2		0	0	1	10	6	20				
Still in learning	21		19		4		0	0	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

LSC funded work-based learning																
Apprenticeships	2005-06		2004-05		2003-04		2002-03		2001-02		2000-01					
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Number of starts	84		50		102		108		104	100	75	100				
Retained*	0		1		27		48		46	44	38	51				
Successfully completed	0		1		20		41		40	38	30	40				
Still in learning	81		28		41		6		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

49. Teaching and learning are particularly good. Of the eight training sessions observed, 88 per cent were good or better. Teaching is well planned and takes good account of learners' needs and their preferred ways of learning. Tutors are knowledgeable about their subject. Lessons are carefully planned to ensure that learners gain basic hairdressing techniques before moving on to more complex skills. Learning styles are identified on the lesson plan and are taken into account during the session. Good links are developed between background knowledge and practical sessions. Tutors give clear explanations during demonstrations and encourage learners to develop their own ideas and to persevere through difficulties. They challenge the learners, and give appropriate help and support. Tutors effectively develop learners' key skills by using interesting and stimulating teaching methods and learning materials. The ratio of tutors to learners is good in background knowledge and practical sessions.

50. The review process is thorough and takes place every 12 weeks. It fully involves the

learner and the employer and places strong emphasis on linking the on-the-job activities to the target-setting process. Details of targets achieved are confirmed with the learner and future targets and action plans for assessment are detailed. Good discussion takes place relating to health and safety and equal opportunities and problems are dealt with in a sensitive way. NHTA's staff celebrate success as part of the progress review and often award in-house certificates of achievement, and praise achievements. Learners self-assess their performance during the review process.

51. There is particularly good specialist support for learners who have additional learning needs. Their needs are identified during the initial assessment and additional help is given in practical hairdressing and background knowledge sessions. Suitably qualified staff deliver the training in key skills using varied activities to motivate the learners. Key skills support also includes on-the-job training. Learners speak very highly of the literacy and numeracy support they receive which helps them with their written work. There is good use of a traffic light system, which allows NHTA's staff to identify learners who are not progressing and provider additional support.

52. Practical assessment opportunities are not frequent enough to allow learners to progress through their programme at an appropriate rate. NHTA's staff visit most learners at their workplace for assessment every 12 weeks, but it is not always possible for the learners to arrange clients for this one assessment. Learners can also be assessed once a fortnight in the training centre, but only if they have client sessions. In some cases, learners who have been on programme for over a year have only achieved one unit of their NVQ. Where learners have salon assessors at their workplace, progress is better. NHTA is currently training more salon-based assessors.

Leadership and management

53. Management initiatives to improve teaching and learning have been particularly effective. Additional support and training for tutors after a lesson observation has shown marked improvement in the quality of teaching. The effective deployment of the staff ensures that learners have very good support in practical and background knowledge sessions from hairdressing and skills for life tutors. The teaching materials are reviewed by the hairdressing and skills for life team to ensure they are clear, at an appropriate level, and include differentiation and learning styles. After each training session, lesson plans are reviewed by the skills for life team and improvements for the delivery of the session are suggested.

54. Resources are satisfactory. Learners have access to adequate resources in training sessions. There is a suitable range and number of clients available for the learners to practise on and to be assessed. Learners are taught by staff who have occupationally relevant qualifications. All staff have or are working towards the trainer and assessor awards and teaching qualifications. All staff attend professional updating courses.

55. Health and safety monitoring and procedures are satisfactory. The health and safety of learners is discussed during the review process and adequate measures are taken to ensure the safety of learners who attend the training centre at NHTA.

56. There is a thorough and supportive internal verification process. Internal verification quality assures the assessment process and helps assessors to improve their assessment practice. However, the system is very complicated.

