

INSPECTION REPORT

SPAN Training Organisation

08 September 2006



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. Span Training Organisation (Span) is a medium-sized work-based learning provider operating in Oxfordshire, Buckinghamshire, Wiltshire and Berkshire. It has provided training in hairdressing for young people since 1983. It has contracts with Milton Keynes, Oxfordshire and Buckinghamshire (MKOB) Learning and Skills Council (LSC), and Swindon and Wiltshire LSC. Its lead LSC is MKOB. Span is a company limited by guarantee and has recently moved its head office to Radley, near Abingdon.
2. Span employs 19 staff, six of whom work part time. A chief executive officer and a managing director oversee the company and provide its strategic direction. They are supported by staff at head office who are responsible for managing training, internal verification and business services. The post of operations manager is vacant. Seven employees are employed as field service managers, working peripatetically to support, train and assess learners.
3. Learners are all employed in salons where they receive on-the-job training and assessment. Off-the-job training is also provided by employers. In addition, Span provides off-the-job training on one day each month, to cover the background knowledge aspects of the framework and key skills. It hires premises at conference and training centres which are local to learners' homes for this purpose. Assessment is carried out by in-salon assessors, although Span also provides peripatetic assessment if necessary. Span works with single salons and chains of up to four salons. Learners and their salons are visited by field service managers who carry out progress reviews, provide some off-the-job training and, if necessary, assessment. Many of Span's assessors are also internal verifiers.

OVERALL EFFECTIVENESS

Grade 3

4. **The overall effectiveness of the provision is satisfactory.** Leadership and management are satisfactory, as are equality of opportunity and quality improvement. Provision in retail and commercial enterprise is satisfactory.
5. **The inspection team was broadly confident in the reliability of the self-assessment process.** Span's self-assessment process is well established and involves all staff. It makes good use of feedback from learners and employers. Action plans which are prepared from self-assessment are implemented and progress is monitored. Most of the findings in the report matched those of inspectors, but some of the strengths were no more than normal practice and Span did not identify all the weaknesses identified by inspectors. Span overgraded its provision.
6. **The provider has demonstrated that it has sufficient capacity to make improvements.** Since the previous inspection, provision at Span has improved. Its success rates have increased steadily and assessment practice is better than before. However, some actions to rectify weaknesses have only recently been made, and have not yet had an effect on the quality of provision.

KEY CHALLENGES FOR SPAN TRAINING ORGANISATION:

- continue to improve overall and timely success rates
- improve the planning and recording of training in salons, and its co-ordination with off-the-job training
- maintain good communication and the successful development of staff
- further develop and implement the observation system
- maintain the quality of employers
- improve the sharing of information on learning needs

GRADES

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

Grades awarded at inspection

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

Retail and commercial enterprise			3
Contributory areas:	Number of learners	Contributory grade	
<i>Hairdressing</i>		3	
Apprenticeships for young people	254	3	

ABOUT THE INSPECTION

7. Span was inspected over four days during September 2006. Only its hairdressing provision was included in the inspection, as there were too few learners in business administration or customer service to be included. Span was previously inspected by the ALL in 2002, when hairdressing provision was satisfactory, as were its leadership and management, quality assurance and equality of opportunity.

Number of inspectors	4
Number of inspection days	14
Number of learners interviewed	34
Number of staff interviewed	17
Number of employers interviewed	10
Number of locations/sites/learning centres visited	23
Number of visits	1

Leadership and Management

Strengths

- good collection and use of management data to monitor learners' progress
- good communication
- good development of staff
- good promotion of wider progression opportunities to learners

Weaknesses

- insufficiently established planning of practical training in salons
- insufficiently rigorous observations of key aspects of learning
- insufficient reinforcement of equality of opportunity

Retail and commercial enterprise

Hairdressing

Strengths

- good salon environments
- good personal support for learners

Weaknesses

- insufficient sharing of information on additional learning needs
- late completion of written key skills tests for some learners

WHAT LEARNERS LIKE ABOUT SPAN TRAINING ORGANISATION:

- practical training in salons
- being treated as individuals, and given individual attention
- the well-structured theory training which is easy to understand
- the friendly and helpful staff at Span
- the confidence and sense of achievement they have gained from the programme
- 'going at my own pace'
- meeting new people
- being part of a team

WHAT LEARNERS THINK SPAN TRAINING ORGANISATION COULD IMPROVE:

- the variety of activity in off-the-job training, which is sometimes boring
- less paperwork, and better explanations of the information on handouts
- salon visits by assessors - there should be more
- the privacy during reviews - the rest of the staff can sometimes overhear
- fewer tests to complete
- 'I don't always like to say if I need help at college'

DETAILED INSPECTION FINDINGS

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

Grade 3

Strengths

- good collection and use of management data to monitor learners' progress
- good communication
- good development of staff
- good promotion of wider progression opportunities to learners

Weaknesses

- insufficiently established planning of practical training in salons
- insufficiently rigorous observations of key aspects of learning
- insufficient reinforcement of equality of opportunity

8. Span's collection and use of performance data on learners is good. This is a strength that has been maintained since the previous inspection. The company has developed a computer programme and process to monitor and measure learners' progress that is easy to understand and use. Field service managers and learners record this progress on laptop computers during reviews in salon. This provides learners with a clear indication of their progress as a percentage score and is used to identify slow progress or cause for concern. Weekly updates on learners' progress are recorded at Span's head office. The managing director uses this data during monthly performance reviews to prompt action for improvement. This collection and use of data has successfully helped field service managers to improve learners' progress and achievement. Success rates are now satisfactory and fewer learners progress beyond their planned end dates. Span has continued to develop the collection of computerised management information since the previous inspection and uses it well to prepare a good range of reports. It routinely uses these to monitor delivery and performance, and to help make management decisions. As part of its performance management, Span has recently begun to risk-band its salons according to their commitment to training.

9. Span's communications are good, a strength maintained since the previous inspection. Communication between managers and staff is particularly effective, especially as many staff work away from the head office. Staff are kept well informed about all aspects of the company through frequent and regular operations, and management and performance meetings. Meetings have clear minutes, with appropriate action points. Managers are open and approachable and staff are confident about sharing problems with them. Field service managers are well equipped with laptop computers, fast internet connections and mobile telephones. They have easy access to electronic communications, regardless of where they are working. Span's communication with external organisations is similarly good and the company is represented on a number of provider and local partnership bodies. It communicates well with the lead body for hairdressing. It provides inductions for new salons and updates for salons that have not had learners for some time. Each year, Span provides employers with a detailed handbook which lays out clearly their rights and responsibilities with regard to training. Its managers visit salons annually to check

SPAN TRAINING ORGANISATION

employers' understanding of these documents. Span produces an informative newsletter for employers three times a year and has recently launched a portal on its website to enable staff, employers and learners to communicate through discussion forums. It gathers information from employers on how its provision can be improved and is prompt and responsive if problems are identified.

10. The development of staff at Span is good. This was also a strength at the previous inspection. The company invests heavily in staff development. It provides detailed and thorough inductions into job roles, including extended work shadowing, which successfully prepares staff for their roles, and build staff teams. Span offers flexible and helpful working arrangements to staff, several of whom are part-time or work from home. Regular reviews of staff performance take place during the year, and contributes to annual appraisal. Individual staff development needs are clearly identified, and well-planned and well-structured training is provided to meet those needs. Span arranges a wide range of training events for all staff. A week-long training seminar is held twice a year when staff take part in role-play exercises and learn useful management skills. These events successfully improve the way staff work with learners. Span provides its staff with good opportunities for professional development and clear routes to help them progress in their careers. If job changes take place, staff are developed carefully into their new roles. However, not all teaching staff have teacher training qualifications.

11. The management of literacy, numeracy and language support at Span is satisfactory. Procedures have recently changed so that all learners are now tested for their literacy and numeracy at the start of their programmes. Previously, they only took these tests if problems arose. If required, additional support is given by field service managers who make extra visits to learners in salons. A member of staff who has a language support qualification provides specialist support in key skills for several learners and identifies where corrective action in the support system is needed. Readers are used for written questions where required and information technology (IT) is used to support learners, including key skills testing. Span provides guidance for staff on how to support learners with dyslexia, but this is not detailed enough. Information on learners with additional learning needs is not shared fully with all those who need to know.

12. Span has a well-established business planning and review process that meets its own needs and those of funding bodies. Health and safety is satisfactorily managed with appropriate checks on new salons and annual checks thereafter. Policies are reviewed and staff are trained in health and safety.

13. The practical training that takes place in salons is not sufficiently well planned or linked to off-the-job, background knowledge training. This was a weakness at the previous inspection. Span gives an annual delivery schedule of background knowledge training to employers, but many do not recall receiving it. Although the practical training provided by employers is effective in developing learners' skills, it is not always part of a planned programme of development that is matched to the development of learners' background knowledge. Many employers do not keep detailed records of the practical training they have carried out with learners, or of the progress that learners have made during these sessions. In the last few weeks, employers have been sent a plan showing when particular aspects of background knowledge training will take place. These are linked to suggested practical activities to be delivered in salons. However, it is too early to say whether this new system will be effective in improving the links between theory and practice, or the

planning of practical training.

Equality of opportunity

Contributory grade 3

14. Span has a suitable range of policies and procedures designed to promote equality and diversity. In addition to its equal opportunities policy, it has a widening participation policy and a policy to help it meet the 'Every Child Matters' requirements of the Common Inspection Framework.

15. Wider progression opportunities for learners are promoted well by Span. The information it provides for learners at induction is aimed at motivating learners to achieve their goals. It provides helpful information and encourages learners to progress from apprenticeships to advanced apprenticeships. Its information, advice and guidance on wider career opportunities are good. For example, one learner who wished to progress to a career in training and assessment, was given helpful advice to enable her to work towards this ambition. Span is involved in projects aimed at enabling learners to progress to higher education and encourages them to do so. It provides good support to help learners realise their aims and is successful at promoting professionalism within the hairdressing industry.

16. Span provides learners with suitable information on equality of opportunity, and their rights and responsibilities as employees, during induction. Field service managers make effective use of a series of questions on health and safety, 'Every Child Matters' and equality of opportunity during reviews, to test learners' knowledge and treatment. Learners' knowledge and understanding of equality of opportunity is satisfactory. For example, they can describe bullying behaviours and the action they should take if these occur. They know of Span's complaints procedure and are confident that their complaints will be dealt with properly. Span responds promptly and effectively to learners' complaints or concerns. Learners are fairly treated and feel well protected by their provider. Some learners feel confident enough to act by themselves to resolve their concerns. For example, one learner was able to resolve her concerns about the inappropriate behaviour of a colleague.

17. Span's publicity literature presents positive images of men and women from different ethnic backgrounds. It collects information on the age, gender and ethnicity of its learners and monitors the performance of these groups. Approximately 10 per cent of its learners are men, and about 4 per cent of its learners are from minority ethnic groups. Span's data shows that these groups are generally not as successful as women, or their white counterparts. It has tried to identify the reasons for this, but the numbers involved are too small to provide meaningful trends or to indicate any particular action Span should take.

18. Span provides clear and detailed information for employers on their roles and responsibilities in learners' training and assessment programmes. Its agreement with employers requires them to provide suitable access to training and assessment, and to provide equality of opportunity. Span gives employers guidance on, and a copy of, its equal opportunities policy. At the initial approval for the salons' participation in the programme, Span carries out a thorough check of their arrangements for equal opportunities, and health and safety. However, although it carries out further checks of health and safety at yearly reviews, Span does not include equality of opportunity in these checks. Although field service managers check learners' treatment during reviews, they have not yet been successful in raising learners' or employers' understanding of equality of

opportunity beyond that which is satisfactory.

Quality improvement

Contributory grade 3

19. Span's chief executive has overall responsibility for quality assurance. The company has suitable policies and work instructions covering all aspects of provision, and provides staff training to support changes. It has a quality plan and cycle showing when quarterly reviews and activities such as self-assessment should take place. Staff are aware of the policy and instructions that support the quality assurance system. Several staff have clear roles in reviewing and updating quality assurance processes. Span makes good use of IT to plan observation of staff and internal verification, and makes quality documents easily available to staff. A good range of data is used for performance monitoring and review.

20. Internal verification has improved since the previous inspection and is thorough. It is successful in assuring the quality of assessment practice over a wide geographical area and for a large number of assessors. Assessors are appropriately risk-banded according to their experience. A computer-based verification plan and sampling system is used effectively to verify different forms of assessment and to plan observations of assessors. Assessors find the feedback following observation useful and relevant to improving their assessment practice. Their professional development is properly monitored and recorded. Verifiers check learners' portfolios on a monthly basis. Span plans an annual timetable of four-monthly standardisation meetings for assessors as well as monthly internal verification days. Assessors' attendance at standardisation meetings has been poor but this is now improving. Span distributes notes and updates to assessors who do not attend meetings and they are also updated when field service managers visit salons. External verifier reports are copied to all relevant staff involved in assessment.

21. Since the previous inspection, Span has steadily increased the proportion of leavers who complete their apprenticeship frameworks, particularly at advanced level. It has improved the assessment practice. However, actions to rectify some weaknesses, such as the co-ordination of on- and off-the-job training and the planning of practical training in salons, are recent and improvements have not been identified as yet.

22. Span gathers feedback from learners and employers and uses this feedback effectively. It has recently prepared a detailed questionnaire based on questions in the Common Inspection Framework and has sent it to employers, but has not yet received a high number of responses. A telephone survey of employers has produced better information. Span uses questionnaires and interviews with learners to collect their views at key stages during their training. The feedback is then analysed and useful reports are prepared. These are used as part of Span's self-assessment process. However, the reports have not identified trends or improvements in learners' perceptions over time. Trainers check learners' knowledge and understanding at the end of off-the-job training sessions and ask their views in order to evaluate training. This information is used to review resources and plan delivery of off-the-job training.

AREAS OF LEARNING

Retail and commercial enterprise

Grade 3

Contributory areas:	Number of learners	Contributory grade
<i>Hairdressing</i>		3
Apprenticeships for young people	254	3

23. Span works with 111 hairdressing salons across Berkshire, Buckinghamshire, Oxfordshire and Wiltshire, to provide hairdressing training for 187 apprentices and 67 advanced apprentices. Twenty-two of these learners are men. Salons range in size from large national chains to small rural salons. All learners are employed. Most are recruited by Span from the hairdressing salons in which they work. The remainder are recruited through Connexions or directly by Span, which finds them employment in salons. Learners can join the programme at any time of the year. They attend off-the-job training at one of seven centres near their place of work on one day each month. These sessions cover key skills and background knowledge training. Practical training is delivered by employers in salons. Assessments are carried out on the job, usually by salon-based assessors. Assessment in salons which have no work-based assessor in the salon is carried out by one of Span's five field service managers. Field service managers visit all learners every four to six weeks to review their progress. Additional visits are made to learners who need additional support.

Hairdressing

Strengths

- good salon environments
- good personal support for learners

Weaknesses

- insufficient sharing of information on additional learning needs
- late completion of written key skills tests for some learners

Achievement and standards

24. The data available for the measurement of success rates for 2003-04 and for 2004-05 are unreliable. Span's own data and LSC returns indicate that too few leavers and completers appear in the qualification success rate tables for both these years. Data for 2005-06 is more accurate. Overall success rates for all apprentices during this period are satisfactory, with just over half completing the full framework. Span's own data on national vocational qualification (NVQ) achievement and framework completion show that achievement has improved steadily in the past three years, and that it has almost closed the gap between NVQ only, and full framework completions. Having identified that timely success rates are low, Span has improved its focus on timely completion and has been successful in reducing the proportion of learners who continue on the programme beyond their planned end date. In November 2005, nearly 20 per cent of its

learners had progressed beyond their planned end date. By August 2006, this had reduced to just over 10 per cent. Span has also been successful in enabling 27 learners to complete their frameworks ahead of schedule, and in advance of their planned end date.

The quality of provision

25. Learners work in good salon environments. Their working conditions are pleasant, and learners use up-to-date equipment and a wide range of good products during their training. Some salons have separate, well-resourced training areas. Salons have a good range of clients and stylists for learners to observe and work with to develop their skills. Salons also provide learners with good additional training and product updating. Employers provide good support to learners who participate in Span's annual hairdressing competition. They deliver effective practical training during regular, weekly training sessions. Learners receive a high level of individual support during these sessions. These salon environments and training are successful in enabling learners to develop a good range of suitable skills. However, salons do not always record or evaluate the activities carried out by learners during their training or when practising their skills at work.

26. Learners benefit from good personal support during their training programmes. Field service managers are particularly responsive to learners' needs for additional help and provide prompt and sensitive support during additional visits to help learners remain on the programme. Learners with particular and individual needs, such as mental health problems, are given suitable help and guidance to enable them to cope with the difficulties they face and to participate fully. Employers offer helpful and positive support when it is needed. During progress reviews with learners, field service managers are successful in motivating learners and providing them with clear targets for completion by the next visit.

27. Assessment practice has improved since the previous inspection and is now satisfactory. There are 91 qualified in-salon assessors, with a further 22 assessors working towards their assessor awards. Field service managers provide assessment in the workplace for those who do not have an in-salon assessor. Learners are given good feedback to help them improve their performance and complete assessments successfully. Oral questions are used well to test learners' understanding. Learners' written work and assignments are of a suitable standard. However, learners make insufficient use of visual evidence of their assessments, such as 'before and after' photographs, and do not provide enough evidence of the research they have done to develop their understanding. Pictures and information from magazines, which learners use to illustrate their work, are not always well presented, especially at level 3.

28. The initial advice and guidance given to learners at interview is good. A 'pre-start pack' outlines the progression opportunities available to them, from working in salons to stage and film work. Advanced apprenticeships are well promoted and many learners choose to progress from apprenticeships to advanced apprenticeships. Learners are given a thorough induction to their programmes. Team building activities and group exercises are used effectively to build their confidence and to help them assess their preferred learning styles. Their roles and responsibilities, and those of their colleagues in the salon, are explained well. Their understanding of the apprenticeship programme and its requirements is satisfactory. However, some learners are confused by the amount of information they are given in a short space of time at induction. Trainers make insufficient

use of completed examples of paperwork to help learners understand how to complete documents, and do not make best use of group exercises to develop learners' knowledge and understanding.

29. Until recently, learners have not always had an initial assessment of their literacy or numeracy needs. Some learners have been on the programme for some time before their needs were identified. Span has recognised this weakness and has introduced diagnostic testing of learners at the start of the programmes. When additional needs are identified, field service managers make extra visits to learners to help them progress. Approximately 10 per cent of apprentices are receiving this additional support. However, Span does not do enough to share information on these additional needs, or details of the support that learners require, with all those involved in their training and development. Although off-the-job training registers identify which learners receive additional support, trainers are not routinely given sufficient written information on learners' specific needs. They are not always able to ensure that sessions meet the individual needs of all learners in their groups. Some employers are not aware of learners' individual needs and are not able to plan practical sessions to help accommodate or overcome these needs. Learners' records do not always capture the action taken to support learners, or the progress they have made. Span has recently appointed a suitably qualified member of staff to support learners' with literacy and numeracy needs, but it is too soon to see the effect of this appointment.

30. Learners take their key skills tests late in their programmes. For some learners, completion of their frameworks is delayed. Span has identified this weakness and has introduced online testing and additional support to help learners complete their key skills earlier. This has been successful in reducing the number of learners who have yet to complete their tests from 20 per cent to 13 per cent. However, several learners remain unaware of the key skills levels required by their frameworks and do not recall any testing to establish the level at which they are working. Some learners are unsure what the key skills consist of, or if they are currently working towards them. Learners' reviews do not always include clear targets for key skills completion.

Leadership and management

31. Field service managers are kept well informed about the requirements of the programme and of changes that may be made. They work well as a team, and with the salons they support. Off-the-job training is well planned, but it does not include enough exercises and activities to develop learners' knowledge and skills. Span has identified that the planning of practical training and co-ordination of on- and off-the-job training are weaknesses and has taken action to improve these aspects of its provision. However, it is too soon to see the effect of these changes.

