

# INSPECTION REPORT

## **Reflections Training Academy**

**27 July 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*

# **INSPECTION REPORT**

## **Reflections Training Academy**

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## INSPECTION REPORT

### DESCRIPTION OF THE PROVIDER

1. Reflections Training Academy (Reflections) was established 1987 under the name of 'House of Clive'. In 2004, the training division changed its name to Reflections, retaining the two training centres in Birmingham and Bristol. The company has contracts with Birmingham and Solihull Learning and Skills Council (LSC) and LSC West of England, to provide national vocational qualifications (NVQs), and advanced apprenticeship and apprenticeship hairdressing programmes. Reflections has a senior director who is supported by a divisional company director and three senior managers. The senior managers are each responsible for administration, hairdressing and LSC contracts. A health and safety manager, together with a staff team of three, monitors health and safety for salon work placements and the training centres. Each of the training centres has a manager, tutor/assessors and work-placement personnel. Learners attend the centres for off-the-job training every two weeks for background knowledge, key skills and practical training.

2. As part of the Key Stage vocational training strategy, Reflections at Birmingham provides hairdressing training for pupils at Key Stage 4. It also provides guidance on quality assurance and internal verification for 10 local schools delivering years 10 and 11 hairdressing programmes.

3. Privately funded programmes include a newly introduced African-Caribbean hairdressing programme at the Birmingham centre and a graduate school, which was developed after employers asked for an advanced training programme as a bridge between the apprenticeship and the advanced apprenticeship.

### OVERALL EFFECTIVENESS

**Grade 2**

4. **The overall effectiveness of the provision is good.** The training for hairdressing is good. Leadership and management are good, as are the arrangements for equal opportunity and quality improvement.

5. **The inspection team had some confidence in the reliability of the self-assessment process.** The self-assessment includes the views of learners, employers and staff. Managers are involved in evaluating practice and validating judgements in the self-assessment report. Reflections is particularly good at recognising its significant strengths. However, the weaknesses identified in the company's most recent self-assessment report do not reflect the judgements of the inspection team. Much of the report is descriptive. Its extensive celebration of Reflections' successes is particularly useful in understanding the range of activities carried out, but at times it is repetitive and does not contain evaluative commentary on key processes. The report helps develop a comprehensive annual development plan and the company is dealing with many of the identified key challenges.

6. **The provider has demonstrated that it is in a good position to make improvements.** Since the previous inspection, there have been many improvements. Reflections has a

## REFLECTIONS TRAINING ACADEMY

strong and inclusive leadership that engages staff well in implementing improvement strategies. The company has continued to improve retention rates, together with good and improving framework completions. Weaknesses identified at the previous inspection are all improved and are now satisfactory. Of the two leadership and management weaknesses, much improvement has occurred in the evaluative commentary in observations of teaching. However, there is only partial improvement in the regular evaluation of diverse learner group's progress and achievement.

### KEY CHALLENGES FOR REFLECTIONS TRAINING ACADEMY:

- continue to improve success rates
- improve the overall monitoring and recording of learners' progress
- ensure target-setting effectively supports learners' progress
- improve the reinforcement of equal opportunity at learners' progress reviews
- maintain the good partnership working with employers and other agencies

### GRADES

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

Grades awarded at inspection

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	
<b><i>Hairdressing</i></b>		<b>2</b>	
Apprenticeships for young people	564	2	
NVQ training for young people	3	2	

## ABOUT THE INSPECTION

7. Since the previous inspection, Reflections has moved to a new academy in Bristol. The provision has increased from 403 to 567 learners, of whom 220 attend the Bristol academy and 347 attend at Birmingham. Two hairdressing inspectors spent two and half days in Bristol before joining the two hairdressing inspectors in Birmingham.

Number of inspectors	5
Number of inspection days	20
Number of learners interviewed	43
Number of staff interviewed	43
Number of employers interviewed	20
Number of locations/sites/learning centres visited	24
Number of partners/external agencies interviewed	2
Number of visits	1

## KEY FINDINGS

### Achievements and standards

**8. Advanced apprenticeship framework completions are good and improved.**

Framework completions have improved from 46 per cent in the two-year period 2003-05 to 54 per cent in 2005-06. Framework success rates for apprentices have improved. Success rates in 2004-05 were 49 per cent. This was a decline of 20 per cent from 69 per cent in 2003-04. This has since improved to 61 per cent in 2005-06.

**9. Retention rates have improved from 54 per cent in 2003-04 to 75 per cent for 2004-05.** Of the learners who have been in training for one year, 98 per cent are still in learning.

**10. There is good development of the learners' practical skills.** Early in the programme the learners demonstrate good manipulative skills in dressing long hair, colouring and cutting. Much evidence of learners' creative work adorns the training centre walls.

**11. Learners produce good word-processed assignment work.** Their portfolios of evidence contain good photographic examples of salon and competition work.

### The quality of provision

Grades given to learning sessions

	Grade 1	Grade 2	Grade 3	Grade 4	Total
Retail and commercial enterprise	0	8	4	2	14
<b>Total</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>14</b>

**12. The accommodation at Bristol is outstanding.** Computer suites, a library, a rest

room and training salons reflect a high-quality commercial environment. Access to the Birmingham training centre has improved but it is still restrictive, since the building has three levels and no lift.

**13. Learners work in a range of good salon workplaces, with up-to-date equipment and high-quality products.**

**14. Learners enjoy a good and extensive range of enrichment activities.** There have been many successes at national and local competitions. Staff who have been successful in high-profile competitions provide good role models. As learners complete a unit, they present their work at the training centre in a hairdressing competition.

**15. All tutors demonstrate good industrial knowledge.** However, they do not always maximise this resource to provide clear examples of practice. Some background knowledge classes have too many closed questions and challenge the learners' understanding insufficiently.

**16. Employers contribute well to the learners' 10-weekly progress reviews.** However, progress targets do not reflect the employer's involvement. Complex documentation produces inconsistencies. There is some ineffective target-setting. Targets are sometimes overly broad and often repeated as learners are unable to complete them.

**17.** Reflections works particularly effectively with employers that are keen to support their learners' progress. Employers are visited frequently, kept well informed, and attend employers' forums. Employers visit the training centre to give demonstrations and judge internal competitions. Learners are able to nominate their employers for the 'Salon of the Year' award.

**18.** Teaching and learning are satisfactory. Clear lesson aims and good use of resources, including multimedia, engage learners. Learners benefit from good demonstrations and effective individual tuition.

**19.** Assessment and internal verification are satisfactory, as is the information and guidance learners receive at the start and at the end of their programme.

**20. Learners' additional support and progress records are completed insufficiently.** Individual learning plans stating specific training needs are weak. Some records do not identify when additional support has happened. The recorded outcomes from each session are weak and do not identify the learners' progress. A new diagnostic tool has been introduced recently.

**21. The monitoring of learners' progress toward completion of the framework is ineffective.** There is some monitoring of completed units, but this is not systematic and it does not identify progress towards units or key skills. As part of the information learning technology (ILT) strategy, the company is introducing electronic records, but these are not yet in place.

### **Leadership and management**

**22. Senior managers provide strong leadership, set clear strategic targets and are committed to training.** They maintain Reflections' well-regarded position in the industry.



Business and three-year planning are good. Leaders are creative in developing new projects, responding well to the needs of learners and employers.

**23. Reflections' planning and management of resources are very good.** Its recently acquired and refurbished premises in Bristol are outstanding. It has plans to match this with new accommodation in Birmingham. The company makes careful plans for expansions in capacity, new technology, resources and materials.

**24. Reflections is particularly good at developing and maintaining good partnerships.** It has very good, productive partnerships with local schools, employers and other training providers. It has good strategies for collecting and acting upon employers' and learners' views. Reflections has a good reputation and forms many new partnerships with employers each year.

**25. Reflections has particularly good strategies for attracting under-represented groups.** It sets challenging equality and diversity targets and it is successful in achieving them. Good strategies for applying for funds, effective partnership working and extensive networking increases the number of opportunities for the learners to access training.

**26. Reflections promotes a strong culture of inclusiveness.** Learners, employers and staff are consulted in decision-making. The company considers suggestions from learners' and employers' forums and acts upon many of them. A newly formed ILT working group includes learner representation.

**27. The company's promotion of equality of opportunity is good.** An equal opportunities principle statement draws from a number of individual equality and diversity statements. Marketing material is particularly inclusive. The training centre has posters and leaflets promoting learners' rights and this is followed up by a taught session. Reflections works with a group of 16 schools, drawing pupils from areas of deprivation. Seventy-three per cent of pupils who finished the programme joined the apprenticeship programme. At the time of the inspection, 10 per cent of Reflections' learners are from minority ethnic groups, 11 per cent are men, 11 per cent have additional learning or social needs, and 41 per cent are from areas identified by the LSC as high youth unemployment, low participation in education and training, and high deprivation.

**28. Staff development is good.** Reflections has a positive attitude towards staff at all levels in the company. Mentors supervise new staff and staff receive good training opportunities. Some staff have progressed through the company to hold senior posts.

**29. Reflections is committed and successful in implementing quality improvement.** It has good, new procedures for implementing a quality improvement framework. Success rates are improving well. There is adequate sharing of good practice across the company.

**30. The company has a recently updated skills for life strategy.** Skills for life is the government's strategy on literacy, numeracy and the use of language. Health and safety information is thorough and clear. Appraisals are regular and are well linked to the development plan, with sufficient targets for improvement.

**31. Managers' use of data to improve learners' success rates is satisfactory.** Success rates are satisfactory, to good and improving. There is insufficient attention placed on some

aspects of recording and monitoring of the learners' individual support and progress towards their qualification aims.

32. The lesson observation system has improved and it is now satisfactory. A comprehensive guide is a useful support for observations. However, some relevant and useful aspects of the guide are not used well.

33. Equality and diversity are reinforced in off-the-job training. However, there is insufficient monitoring and reinforcement of equal opportunity during the learners' progress reviews.

34. The company's quality improvement documents are insufficiently clear. The self-assessment process is consultative and includes the views of staff, learners and employers. The resulting self-assessment report matched inspection grades and contains clear significant strengths, many of them also identified by the inspectors. However, weaknesses identified were not in the report. The resulting one-year development plan is extensive but it is unclear why some strengths have been included. The company has implemented much action to improve the quality of provision but these are not identified in the development plan.

## **Leadership and management**

### **Strengths**

- strong leadership
- very good planning and management of resources
- very good partnership working
- particularly effective strategies to recruit learners from under-represented groups
- strong culture of inclusiveness
- good staff development

### **Weaknesses**

- insufficient reinforcement of equal opportunities during learners' progress reviews
- insufficiently clear quality improvement documents

## **Retail and commercial enterprise**

### ***Hairdressing***

#### *Strengths*

- good and improving advanced apprenticeship success rates
- good development of apprentices' practical skills
- high-quality accommodation and learning resources which enhance the learners' experience
- very good employer partnership working
- good enrichment activities

*Weaknesses*

- some ineffective target-setting
- insufficient recording of additional support and progress
- ineffective monitoring of learners' progress towards framework completion

## **WHAT LEARNERS LIKE ABOUT REFLECTIONS TRAINING ACADEMY:**

- 'the teachers are great and motivate us'
- 'just coming to the training academy is enjoyable - they make training fun'
- 'you can talk to the staff about anything'
- 'tutors are talented and full of ideas - they show you different ways of doing things'
- the training centre has excellent equipment and good professional ranges of products
- 'we are treated like adults, I would go more often if possible'

## **WHAT LEARNERS THINK REFLECTIONS TRAINING ACADEMY COULD IMPROVE:**

- the number of models available that want more adventurous colours and styles for advanced apprentices

## DETAILED INSPECTION FINDINGS

### LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

**Grade 2**

#### Strengths

- strong leadership
- very good planning and management of resources
- very good partnership working
- particularly effective strategies to recruit learners from under-represented groups
- strong culture of inclusiveness
- good staff development

#### Weaknesses

- insufficient reinforcement of equal opportunities during learners' progress reviews
- insufficiently clear quality improvement documents

35. The company's senior managers provide strong leadership and are committed to training. They have good historical and contemporary knowledge of the industry and implement practical measures to improve the quality of the service. They set clear strategic direction and are maintaining Reflections' position in the industry. Business planning and three-year training development plans are good and contain clear aims and objectives. Leaders are creative in developing new projects. Communication of the company's ethos and culture is clear to new and existing staff. Executive information provides good guidance for strategic direction. Leaders respond well to the needs of learners and employers, and they are good mentors for new staff.

36. Reflections' planning and management of resources are very good. Good management of resources was a feature at the previous inspection. Directors and senior managers plan and allocate resources very well to maintain a good position in a very competitive and changing industry. Recently acquired and refurbished accommodation at Bristol is outstanding. The company plans to match this with new accommodation for Birmingham within a year. Good resources are available in the training salons. Senior management are careful to select and plan for expansion of capacity, new technology, training materials and accessories. Reflections uses tutors, assessors and teaching resources effectively. Its staff are adequately qualified and experienced. Reflections uses the space within the training centre well. The proportion of staff to learners is good. Appraisals are regular, match job roles, and linked adequately to development plans with sufficient targets. Meetings at all levels are regular and contain clear recorded information.

37. Reflections forms, develops and maintains very good partnerships. Very good and productive partnerships exist with a provider working with 14 to 16 year olds, many of whom have barriers to learning. Most of these learners achieved their objectives in 2005-06 and showed better attitudes and focus back in school. Very good historical and

new partnerships exist with many employers. Many new salons are successfully engaged every year. Reflections has a good reputation with local employers and together they ensure that learners work in productive and safe environments, and they give learners the time and space to develop their skills. Reflections has regular meetings with employers. A new employer forum has been created to get direct employer input. Reflections works hard to engage and include employers in the training process. Good partnerships have created new cultural training options for new learners. Reflections holds very good celebratory events where employers judge learners' achievements.

38. Reflections has a recently updated skills for life strategy, which outlines adequate policies for initial assessment and additional support. Health and safety information is clear. Thorough arrangements to assess and communicate health and safety are in place that includes training for all staff, regular updates and action on new legal requirements. Reflections provides regular information to learners and staff about safe practice.

39. Managers use data to improve learners' success rates satisfactorily. For example, all staff are aware of the company's focus on improving retention rates. This was a key challenge in the self-assessment report. Success rates have been good on advanced apprenticeships and are improving well in 2005-06 to 54 per cent. Apprenticeship success rates dipped in 2004-05 to 49 per cent from 69 per cent in 2003-04, but they are currently 61 per cent in 2005-06. However, there is insufficient attention placed on some aspects of recording and monitoring learners' individual support and their progress towards successful completion of the framework.

### **Equality of opportunity**

### **Contributory grade 2**

40. Reflections has particularly good strategies for attracting learners from under-represented groups into training. The strategic development plan sets challenging equality and diversity targets that contribute to development planning. Particularly effective strategies support the achievement of these targets. Effective partnership working with a Birmingham project group resulted in funding for mobile ramps and automatic door openers to improve access to the Birmingham ground-floor salon. The fund also provided a mobile computer, audio text software, digital recording devices and an induction loop system. New premises in Bristol provide excellent facilities that conform to all requirements of the Disability Discrimination Act 1995. Effective partnership work with a group of 16 schools from some of the most deprived area of Birmingham brings year 10 and 11 pupils to the training centre one day each week. Seventy-three per cent of the pupils who completed their programme progressed into apprenticeships during 2005-06. In response to the strategic area review, Reflections used the LSC and European Social Fund to develop and run an African-Caribbean NVQ pilot. Ten specialist African-Caribbean salons are now supporting 17 learners in these awards. Reflections won an award for its involvement in this project and its success in breaking down barriers and combating racism. The company has good links with the Disabled Council of West Midlands, resulting in extra equality and diversity training for its staff. Of the learners recruited in 2005-06, 10 per cent are from minority ethnic groups, 11 per cent are men and 19 per cent are learners with learning or social needs. As in the previous inspection, Reflections recruits learners from areas identified by the relevant LSC where there is high youth unemployment, lower proportions of participation in education and training and high deprivation. Forty-one per cent of the learners are from these areas. At the previous inspection, one of the weaknesses was the insufficient comparison of the performance of different groups of learners. This has only been resolved partially.

Although reports are available, Reflections does not analyse them regularly to check how each of the groups are performing.

41. Reflections promotes a strong culture of inclusiveness. Learners, employers and staff are members of working groups and are consulted in the decision-making process. Suggestions from learners' forums and group meetings are carefully considered at staff meetings and resulting actions have included a drinks vending machine, new lockers, brighter decorations and new computer printers. Other improvements include free fruit and/or toast available to learners throughout the morning, a disposable camera for use in their salons to evidence practical work and the purchase of small equipment for use during practical sessions at the training centres. At the Bristol training centre, the learners requested a library. Books available extend to reference books, general interest, autobiographies and special 'short read' summary editions of popular writers. A newly formed working group looking at electronic learning technologies includes learner representation.

42. The promotion of equal opportunities at Reflections is good. An equality and diversity principle statement draws from individual policies containing detailed strategies on recruitment, disability, race equality discrimination, bullying, and equality and diversity within salon work placement. Marketing materials are particularly inclusive, containing images identifying a range of diverse ethnic and gender groups. As part of induction, learners receive leaflets that explain their rights and this is further reinforced by a training session on employment responsibilities and rights. At a learner's request, the placement team contact employers on the learner's behalf to discuss their rights to a minimum wage. The training centre has posters and leaflets promoting learners' rights and giving details of support agencies. Learners all receive a small laminated card with useful telephone numbers, such as those for a national advice centre.

43. The company reinforces equality and diversity in off-the-job training through four well-planned learning sessions, covering topics on stereotyping, religious awareness, human rights, and equality and diversity awareness. However, there is insufficient monitoring and reinforcement of equality and diversity as part of the learners' progress reviews. Learners are not always fully aware of the wider equality and diversity issues, their personal responsibilities and the relevance within the workplace.

## **Quality improvement**

## **Contributory grade 2**

44. Staff development is good. Reflections has a positive attitude towards staff at all levels developing their potential well in the company. Clear guidelines exist for new employees, including handbooks that outline roles and responsibilities well. Mentors, usually a workplace supervisor, help new staff to learn all aspects of their role over a sufficient period of time. Staff are given good training opportunities by Reflections' directors, who pay for and support them in participating and completing a range of professional courses. Staff retention is good and some staff have developed and progressed through the company to hold senior posts. The company is known well to industry professionals. Staff development was a key strength at reinspection.

45. Reflections is committed to and successful in implementing quality improvement. It has good, improved new procedures for implementing a quality improvement framework. All key practices are clearly identified in the comprehensive quality procedures and practice document. The company's success rates have improved well. All of the

weaknesses identified at the previous inspection are fully or partly resolved. Leaders and managers respond well to the learners' suggestions. Employers trust Reflections to train their employees to meet the needs of the industry. All assessors and tutors receive good support and value the feedback that they receive. Clear guidelines and procedures are in place to support managers to recognise and tackle poor practices or improve the quality of teaching and learning. Procedures link adequately to regular reviews with tutors. Recruitment is careful and matches the growth in capacity and quality needs of the company. Good practice is shared adequately across the organisation.

46. At the previous inspection, lesson observation reports were identified as a weakness. Improvements have been made to the system and it is satisfactory overall. A clear guide is useful to support observations. Tutors and assessors value the system. Some aspects of the guide, which would be relevant and useful, are not used well. Some qualitative judgements contain insufficient description. However, the overall summary sheet does evaluate and contain sufficient information to support tutors to make improvements and managers review progress. Internal verification is satisfactory. Verifiers and assessors keep in regular contact. Reflections routinely holds standardisation meetings and verifiers also moderate the technical and key skills standards of learners' work. Sampling plans are satisfactory.

47. The self-assessment report is insufficiently clear. The company has taken much action to improve the quality of provision. Although quality improvement is integral to the ongoing operational activities carried out by senior managers, it is not always recorded in a meaningful way. The self-assessment process is consultative and includes the views of staff, learners and employers. The resulting report matches inspection grades, contains clear headline strengths, many identified by inspectors, but weaknesses identified were not in the report. However, Reflections has taken action to improve two of the weaknesses identified by inspectors, even though they are not identified in the report. The resulting one-year development plan is extensive, but many of the improvement strategies completed by Reflections do not appear in the plan.



## AREAS OF LEARNING

### Retail and commercial enterprise

### Grade 2

Contributory areas:	Number of learners	Contributory grade
<b><i>Hairdressing</i></b>		<b>2</b>
Apprenticeships for young people	564	2
NVQ training for young people	3	2

48. Reflections provides training for 564 apprentices, of whom 146 are advanced apprentices, 418 are apprentices and three learners are on NVQ programmes. Reflections has two city-centre training academies, one in Bristol and the other in Birmingham. Reflections works with 267 salons in the Bristol and Birmingham area where learners are employed. Learners visit one of the academies every two weeks for background knowledge, and practical and key skills training and assessment. There are 48 full-time and part-time staff, of whom 21 are tutor/assessors. Tutors teach within one of the academies for part of the week and also have a caseload of approximately 40 learners who they visit at work to carry out reviews and assessments. Learners have two-weekly visits, but if they have a work-based assessor then visits are four-weekly. Bristol and Birmingham area workplace reviews take place every 10 weeks. Nineteen per cent of salons have a member of staff who acts as a workplace assessor.

### ***Hairdressing***

#### *Strengths*

- good and improving advanced apprenticeship success rates
- good development of apprentices' practical skills
- high-quality accommodation and learning resources which enhance the learners' experience
- very good employer partnership working
- good enrichment activities

#### *Weaknesses*

- some ineffective target-setting
- insufficient recording of additional support and progress
- ineffective monitoring of learners' progress towards framework completion

### **Achievement and standards**

49. Advanced apprentices framework completions are good and have improved from 46 per cent in the two-year period 2003-05, to 54 per cent in 2005-06. A further four advanced apprentices are close to completion. Reflections has successfully integrated the technical certificate into the NVQ training and assessment for advanced apprentices. Key skills have been achieved in a timely manner. Framework success rates for apprentices have improved. Success rates in 2004-05 were 49 per cent. This was a decline of 20 per

cent from 69 per cent in 2003-04. This has since improved to 61 per cent in 2005-06.

50. Overall retention rates have improved on all programmes. In 2003-04, 56 per cent of learners were retained, which improved to 75 per cent in 2004-05. Currently, 98 per cent of learners that started in 2005-06 remain in learning.

51. The development of learners' practical skills is good. Most learners work on clients in the workplace. Inspectors observed learners in their first five months of training demonstrating good manipulative skills in dressing long hair in up-styles, using a range of techniques such as twisting, plaiting, setting and backcombing. Most of these learners have completed a unit of their NVQ within the first three months. There is much evidence of learners' creative work in the range of competitions held throughout the year. Photographs adorn the walls of the academy and show the high-quality work that apprentices produce. Some advanced apprentices develop skills to a high level in colour and cutting techniques. Apprentices were observed in their workplace demonstrating in-depth consultation followed by rich feedback to the client. Apprentices produced good assignments, which were word-processed and contained evidence of internet research. Their portfolios of evidence contain good examples of practical work carried out in their salons and for competitions.

Programme	End Year	Success Rate	No, of learners	Provider NVQ Rate	National NVQ Rate	Provider framework rate	National framework rate
Advanced Apprenticeships	2003-04	overall	39	51	43	46	32
		timely	39	33	27	31	20
	2004-05	overall	67	48	41	46	29
		timely	66	32	28	30	20
Apprenticeships	2003-04	overall	102	71	62	69	49
		timely	103	58	38	57	31
	2004-05	overall	226	50	49	49	41
		timely	225	48	32	47	28
NVQ training for young	2003-04	overall	25	52	46	0	0
		timely	26	38	31	0	0
	2004-05	overall	45	44	47	0	0
		timely	44	43	28	0	0

For details of how to calculate overall and timely success rates please refer to the "Quality Improvement Pack" (available from the Learning and Skills Council's website: [www.lsc.gov.uk](http://www.lsc.gov.uk)).

### The quality of provision

52. The new accommodation at the Bristol academy is outstanding. Learning resources for both background knowledge and practice are excellent. Classrooms are spacious, have interactive electronic teaching aids and provide a good learning environment. There is a computer suite, library and a rest room providing free refreshments for the learners. Training salons and background knowledge rooms at both centres reflect high-quality commercial environments, with up-to-date equipment. Reasonable adjustments have

been made at the Birmingham site, but access is limited due to stairs. Learners work in a range of good salon workplaces with pleasant working environments, up-to-date equipment, and high-quality products. Some learners are employed by high-profile city-centre salons, where high standards of service and skill are promoted. The academies attract sufficient clients for apprentices but there are insufficient appropriate clients for some level 3 tasks.

53. Reflections works effectively in partnership with employers. Employers are keen to work with Reflections' staff in developing learners' skills and planning on-the-job assessments. Frequent visits by Reflections' staff and regular newsletters keep employers well informed of sector information and changes. Reflections encourages employers into the training centres to observe training and give demonstrations. Employers judge internal competitions, attend organised training days involving high-profile demonstration teams, and benefit from funding that was successfully attracted by Reflections to provide assessor training. Reflections has recently introduced an award that allows learners to nominate their employers for 'Salon of the Year' award. This is highly motivational and winners are announced at Reflections' awards ceremony. This event attracted a large number of employers and parents.

54. Learners enjoy an extensive range of enrichment activities. This broadens their knowledge of their industry and develops their creativity and confidence. Local and national competitions are well promoted in the academy and learners are supported and encouraged to participate. There have been many successes. Staff provide good role models, as they too have had success in high-profile national competitions. Links with major suppliers provide additional opportunities for in-house training. Learners present their work at special days arranged in the academy. When they have completed a practical unit, such as dressing hair, colouring or cutting, they present their skills at a competition at the Reflections diploma day. Learners are very enthusiastic about this mandatory event, as staff and judges select the top three winning styles.

55. Teaching and learning are satisfactory overall. In better lessons, aims are clear, understood by the learners and the lesson content is well planned. Learners are engaged and enjoyed the use of multimedia resources. In the better practical sessions, learners benefited from a good proportion of staff to learners, good demonstrations and effective individual tuition. Learners present a professional image and commitment when working in their salons and the academy. Although most lesson plans have details of the content and activities, in some the topic delivery is insufficiently detailed. All tutors demonstrate good background and industry knowledge, but this was not always used to best effect. They did not always maximise the resources to provide clear examples. In some background knowledge lessons there were too many closed questions and insufficient challenging of the learners' understanding. At Bristol, there was some poor reinforcement of skin testing and sterilisation of tools in practical sessions.

56. Assessment and internal verification are satisfactory. There is a comprehensive plan of internal verification to cover all learners, assessors, units, and methods of assessment. There is regular attendance of the 21 salon-based assessors at standardisation meetings. However, the sampling of assessors and the quality assurance of internal verification sampling has not met planned target dates. All observations of assessment practice results in a grade which feeds into the overall company quality assurance.

57. Information, advice and guidance are provided by highly qualified nominated recruitment staff. Learners have the opportunity to attend taster days at the academy to sample the salon environment and talk to staff and learners.

58. Learners' progress reviews are completed every 10 weeks and they are particularly inclusive. Employers have a good understanding of the NVQ and use this time productively, discussing progress and training that will support their learners.

59. Progress targets are insufficiently detailed and do not reflect the richness of these conversations. Target-setting documents confuse the learners and the employers and produce inconsistencies in use. Targets are often overly broad and they are often repeated due to learners not completing them.

60. Individual additional learning support records are insufficiently detailed. Although learners have an initial assessment to determine what level of literacy and numeracy they should be working towards, there is insufficient diagnostic assessment. Individual learning plans, stating specific training needs, are weak. In some instances, there is no recorded evidence that identifies when additional support has happened. There is inconsistency across the two sites in recording support received. The recording of outcomes from each support session is weak, some are not dated and, on some, it is not clear how the learner has progressed. Reflections has recently introduced a new diagnostic tool but it is too early to judge its effect.

61. There is no clear overall monitoring of learners' progress towards the completion of the framework. Although there is some monitoring of unit completion, systematic updating of achieved units is not in place. Assessors, learners, and sometimes employers spend an excessive amount of time going through learners' portfolios to establish achieved outcomes within the units. Evidence regarding key skills progress is only held within learners' portfolios. The absence of a clear overview makes it difficult to establish whether trends are emerging in learners' progress towards completion of the framework. As part of the new ILT strategy, tutors will complete electronic records of unit outcomes at the time of achievement. This is not yet in place.

### **Leadership and management**

62. Staff have clear roles and responsibilities. Each member of staff has objectives and targets that are well communicated and reviewed. The two centre managers who are recently in post have received a thorough induction and have been well supported by the senior management team. Staff teams meet regularly and hold informal meetings. However, there are insufficient records of actions that result from the meetings to help develop quality improvement.

63. There is sufficient qualified and experienced staff to meet the needs of the programme and learners. Tutors/assessors have good industry knowledge and experience that is reflected in their teaching. There is good ongoing staff development linked to the requirements of their role and their own aspirations. Staff and learners carry out equality and diversity training. However, there is insufficient evaluation of the effect that the training has on the learners' understanding or staff performance. Teaching sessions are not always planned to take account of individual learner needs and although learners have a satisfactory understanding of equality and diversity, there is insufficient emphasis on equal opportunities during review.

64. The self-assessment process is ongoing and inclusive. Staff are clear about their individual contributions. The strengths closely matched those found by inspectors. However, weaknesses were insufficiently clear and the inspectors found additional weaknesses.

