

# INSPECTION REPORT

## **N&B Training Company Limited**

**16 November 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
- **learnndirect** provision
- Adult and Community Learning
- training funded by Jobcentre Plus
- education and training in prisons, at the invitation of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Prisons
- 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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## **N&B Training Company Limited**

### **Contents**

#### **Summary**

Description of the provider	1
Overall effectiveness	1
Key challenges for N&B Training Company Limited	2
Grades	2
About the inspection	2
What learners like about N&B Training Company Limited	4
What learners think N&B Training Company Limited could improve	4

#### **Detailed inspection findings**

Leadership and management	5
Equality of opportunity	6
Quality improvement	7
Health, public services and care	9

# INSPECTION REPORT

## DESCRIPTION OF THE PROVIDER

1. N&B Training Company Limited (N&B Training) was established in March 1998 and provides work-based learning in the areas of care, early years care and playwork, throughout Surrey and southwest London.
2. N&B Training contracts with Surrey Learning and Skills Council (LSC) for the funding of its apprentices. At the time of the inspection, there were 70 learners. Twenty-nine of them were apprentices, and 41 were advanced apprentices. New standards were introduced in November 2005, and the early years care and education national vocational qualification (NVQ) became the children's care, learning and development NVQ. N&B Training also had 18 privately funded learners, and 17 who are funded through a European Social Fund (ESF) project. The provider also provides assessor training for individuals seeking to gain their A1/A2 assessor qualifications.
3. N&B Training's offices are based in Walton-on-Thames and staff support learners who are employed in children's nurseries which are spread widely throughout Surrey. The county has a successful economy with high employment and low levels of social problems. The unemployment rate in Surrey is 0.9 per cent which is well below the national and regional averages. Small pockets of deprivation do exist and minority ethnic groups are more highly represented in these areas. There are low levels of unemployment and high housing costs.

## OVERALL EFFECTIVENESS

**Grade 3**

4. **The overall effectiveness of the provision is satisfactory.** Provision in health, public services and care is satisfactory. Leadership and management are satisfactory as is equality of opportunity. Quality improvement is inadequate.
5. **The inspection team had some confidence in the reliability of the self-assessment process.** N&B training has a regular self-assessment schedule which is linked to staff meetings. The provider's management and staff combined to produce the self-assessment report, and staff were actively involved through team meetings. The self-assessment, report however, is too descriptive and is not evaluative enough. Inspectors' findings matched some of the strengths and weaknesses identified in the self-assessment report.
6. **The provider has demonstrated that it has sufficient capacity to make improvements.** N&B Training's staff have a good understanding of the provider's overall purpose and objectives. The small team provides suggestions for change which are often taken up by directors to promote improvements. Monthly progress review meetings have contributed to the marked improvement in apprenticeship framework success rates, but similar improvements in framework success rates for advanced apprentices are taking longer to materialise. N&B Training has made a wide range of improvements to procedures and systems, as part of a development plan agreed with the local LSC. Many of the improvements stemmed from the external stimulus of the development plan, rather than from in-house activities.

**KEY CHALLENGES FOR N&B TRAINING COMPANY LIMITED:**

- explore and develop innovative approaches for learning opportunities
- build on the significant improvement of apprenticeship framework success rates
- improve advanced apprenticeship framework success rate
- use data and evaluation to monitor organisational performance more effectively
- improve the collection and evaluation of learners' and employers' feedback
- use increased target-setting to drive improvements in the quality of provision
- develop well focused initiatives to widen participation

**GRADES**

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

Grades awarded at inspection

<b>Leadership and management</b>		<b>3</b>
Contributory grades:		
Equality of opportunity		3
Quality improvement		4

<b>Health, public services and care</b>			<b>3</b>
<b>Contributory areas:</b>	<b>Number of learners</b>	<b>Contributory grade</b>	
<b>Early years</b>		<b>3</b>	
Apprenticeships for young people	70	3	

**ABOUT THE INSPECTION**

7. Inspectors reported on and graded N&B Training in the health, public services and care area of learning, and in leadership and management. The ESF-funded provision was not inspected because it had previously been inspected within a more general inspection of ESF provision in the geographical area. The inspection took place over four days in November 2006. This was the only visit by inspectors.

Number of inspectors	3
Number of inspection days	12
Number of learners interviewed	17
Number of staff interviewed	15
Number of employers interviewed	15
Number of locations/sites/learning centres visited	16
Number of visits	2

## **Leadership and management**

### **Strengths**

- significant successful actions to improve some areas of provision
- good opportunities and support for staff development

### **Weaknesses**

- insufficient focus in widening participation to under-represented groups
- inadequate use of information to monitor organisational performance

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

### ***Early years***

#### *Strengths*

- significant improvement in apprenticeship success rates
- good range of methods to collect assessment evidence

#### *Weaknesses*

- poor success rates for advanced apprenticeship frameworks
- insufficient development of learning opportunities

## **WHAT LEARNERS LIKE ABOUT N&B TRAINING COMPANY LIMITED:**

- excellent support and help from assessors
- good support from staff and colleagues at work
- 'gaining my qualification at work rather than at college'
- 'my assessor is very accessible'
- lessons in the training centre for the technical certificate
- 'what I am learning about children'
- 'lots of praise is given to me'
- 'the clear explanations that I get'
- 'the regular visits I get from my assessor'

## **WHAT LEARNERS THINK N&B TRAINING COMPANY LIMITED COULD IMPROVE:**

- the use of more simple English
- the clarity of messages after an holistic assessment
- support - 'could help me be less nervous about observations'
- learning support - 'more suggestions about additional reading'
- planning - better organised off-the-job training sessions
- training - 'give learners the confidence to raise issues'
- 'more teaching sessions on childcare theorists'
- efficiency in training - there are delays in marking work



## DETAILED INSPECTION FINDINGS

### LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

**Grade 3**

#### Strengths

- significant successful actions to improve some areas of provision
- good opportunities and support for staff development

#### Weaknesses

- insufficient focus in widening participation to under-represented groups
- inadequate use of information to monitor organisational performance

8. Since the previous inspection, N&B Training has implemented significant successful actions to improve some areas of the provision. There has been a marked improvement in the proportion of learners completing the full apprenticeship framework, rising from zero in 2003-04 to 56 per cent in 2005-06. The provider has restructured the timing, content and delivery of key skills training and the technical certificate. Learners' achievements in key skills have improved, especially in application of number. Recent pass rates for the technical certificate are very good. More learners are completing key skills and gaining technical qualifications earlier in their programmes.

9. N&B Training has invested considerable time and effort in improving internal verification procedures and has produced not only a sound internal verification process, but also good assessment practices. The provider has introduced observation of all aspects of the assessor's role. Feedback on teaching observations is constructive, and improvements are evident in the quality of performance of several assessors. Standards in the workplace are now assessed more thoroughly. N&B Training no longer uses two nurseries that failed to reach minimum agreed standards.

10. N&B Training has introduced a useful assessors' handbook which sets out the main policies and procedures. The policies are comprehensive and well written, and cover most aspects of the provision. More recently, the provider has produced a wide range of new procedures, some of which form part of a development plan that has been agreed with the local LSC. These procedures include the introduction of a 'Be Safe' handbook for learners during induction, together with a related certificate. Health and safety principles have been established in the new children's care, learning and development programme, and are reinforced in the advice given to assessors for assessment of the workplace. First aid training is now included in a new employer agreement. N&B Training has established an 'at risk' register to identify learners who may leave the programme before completing their objectives. The registration procedures have been improved for applying for proxy qualifications for exemptions in key skills, and online examinations have been introduced. There are now successful procedures to ensure that areas identified for particular support in learners' initial assessments are followed up effectively.

11. Opportunities and support for staff development are good. N&B Training publicises its commitment to improving the skills and knowledge of its employees. The training needs of each assessor are analysed each year, concentrating on aspects which will help

them carry out their roles more effectively. An annual staff appraisal also emphasises identification of staff's development needs. All staff carry out regular development activities to meet the needs of N&B Training and to help their personal development. Staff have received training recently in dyslexia awareness and have regular updates about occupational matters. One member of staff has attended external training about self-assessment, and another member is undergoing teacher training.

12. The provider sets targets, but only those that relate to the contractual arrangements with the funding bodies, or the annual development plan. A number of standard performance measures have been established to enable managers to ensure compliance with contractual targets and to meet objectives in the development plan. N&B Training does not use performance data concerning the provider and individual members of staff to provide the basis for measuring progress and monitoring performance against agreed targets and objectives. As part of the recent development plan agreed with Surrey LSC, some improved targeting has been introduced. There are few organisational targets which are aimed specifically at improving the quality of provision. Targets for assessors are the same as the provider's targets, and do not incorporate targets for their individual roles and responsibilities.

### **Equality of opportunity**

### **Contributory grade 3**

13. N&B Training has clear and helpful equality and diversity policies and procedures. The provider also has an appropriate equal opportunities development plan which has clearly formulated objectives, actions and responsibilities. N&B Training has made little progress towards the objectives of this plan and the equality and diversity impact measures plan because both plans have only recently been developed. A well-presented harassment and bullying policy is reinforced during learners' induction programmes. The provider has an equal opportunities incident log book and investigation procedure that ensure the proper consideration of complaints brought forward by learners or staff.

14. N&B Training's commitment to equality and diversity is communicated satisfactorily. Recently improved induction information for learners includes clear statements about equality of opportunity, although some of the material in the induction programme relating to legislative aspects needs to be updated to include the most recent changes. Staff meetings have a fixed agenda item which relates to equality of opportunity and staff have had some updates, with more planned.

15. Learners' additional needs are met appropriately. All learners have initial assessments to screen them for literacy and numeracy needs, using nationally recognised tests. Those learners with additional needs are supported mainly by their assessors, and those learners with more severe needs are referred to an externally based specialist literacy, numeracy and language skills tutor. Staff have had dyslexia awareness training to help identify support requirements. Information concerning learners' preferred learning styles is gathered as part of the introduction to their programmes. The various aspects of this initial information are not routinely recorded in the individual learning plans, although short-term planning does take into account the differences in the capability and performance of learners.

16. N&B Training's publicity material gives appropriate advice to potential learners about the possible progression routes that are available within the provision. Learning materials are described in a level of language that is right for most learners, but if some of them

experience difficulties then assessors use appropriate alternative methods to ensure their understanding. The learning resources used for equality and diversity training are satisfactory.

17. The provider's offices in Walton-upon-Thames are not accessible to visitors with restricted mobility. N&B Training recognises this situation and has made arrangements to offer alternative, short-term accommodation locally, although this facility is not made known to visitors.

18. Some social groups are poorly represented on apprenticeship programmes. One learner is from a minority ethnic group, and there are no male apprentices. N&B Training has set itself targets for increasing the participation by such groups. These targets are detailed in an equality and diversity impact measures plan for the forthcoming contractual year. N&B Training's marketing material does not contain stereotypical images, but it does not publicise sufficiently the fact that the provider welcomes participation by minority ethnic groups. Staff from N&B Training regularly attend careers conventions which are organised by local provider networks and by careers organisations. The provider does not promote its apprenticeship provision sufficiently to voluntary organisations, community groups, media outlets or schools. The provider's network of contacts does not include enough specialist organisations to support learners with specific needs. N&B Training has good knowledge of the local communities, but this knowledge is not used sufficiently to overcome prospective learners' perceived barriers to participation. The management information system provides reports which differentiate between learners in terms of gender and minority groups, but is not able to analyse or evaluate such data.

### **Quality improvement**

### **Contributory grade 4**

19. N&B Training has a clearly stated quality assurance policy and associated procedures. It has introduced a calendar to inform staff of quality assurance procedures to be carried out each month. The provider and its staff are committed to continuous improvement of the provision. Managers and staff have concentrated effectively on improving the fundamental management aspects of the programme. The provider has worked with the local LSC to introduce more formal systems in order to improve business processes. Good practice and performance issues are often identified informally by members of staff. In such a small organisation information of this type is communicated effectively with all team members.

20. Available information is not used adequately to monitor organisational performance. There is not enough data to enable managers to make timely decisions. At the time of the inspection, the provider was reliant on manual systems for data collection. A new computerised system has been installed a few weeks before the inspection, but was not fully operational. N&B Training collects data in a variety of ways, but much of it is either not collated, or the process takes a very long time. Actions have been taken to improve the provision, but there is little systematic evaluation of their effect. N&B Training has used observations of some of its activities as a basis for evaluating staff's performances. Issues arising are discussed in curriculum meetings, but formal observations of programme activities are not used sufficiently as a quality improvement technique.

21. Much of the improvements made have been generated externally rather than internally. N&B Training has recently used a development plan which was agreed with

Surrey LSC to help with the evaluation and improvement of performance. The provider collects information to meet its contractual obligations, but does not formally evaluate its own effectiveness sufficiently. N&B Training uses staff meetings and participants' progress reviews as a means of collecting information about performance. The provider does not evaluate the results sufficiently within a quality improvement framework. Performance data is becoming more readily available from management information sources, but is not being used in a structured way to support, reinforce or evaluate the changes that have been implemented. The provider collects feedback by questionnaire and telephone from learners and employers at times specified in the quality assurance calendar. However, the response rate is low and questions are not designed well enough to produce the evaluative responses required. The complaints process, however, is well-documented and managed. The small number of complaints received had a prompt response and effective action was taken.

22. Information from staff meetings is used in the self-assessment process. Regular self-assessment meetings are scheduled in the quality assurance calendar. The management team, together with other staff, drafted the most recent self-assessment report. It is detailed and well presented. Inspectors' findings matched a number of the strengths identified, but considered some of them to be normal practice. They also noted some important weaknesses that were not recognised in the self-assessment report. The grades given by the inspectors matched some of those in the self-assessment report but not all. Much of the report is descriptive and does not evaluate the provider's performance sufficiently.

## AREAS OF LEARNING

### Health, public services and care

### Grade 3

Contributory areas:	Number of learners	Contributory grade
<b>Early years</b>		<b>3</b>
Apprenticeships for young people	70	3

23. N&B Training has 70 learners on apprenticeships in early years and childcare training. Twenty-nine learners are apprentices, and 41 are advanced apprentices. Thirty-three of the learners are aged between 16 and 18 years, and 37 learners are aged over 19 years. All of the learners are women, one learner is from a minority ethnic group, and 10 learners have additional needs. All apprentices are employed. N&B Training provides off-the-job training through a programme of four technical certificate training sessions, and some key skills training and test preparation. Assessment visits are carried out every four weeks and learners' progress reviews are held every 12 weeks. There is a training manager and five assessors, of whom four are also internal verifiers. These staff provide training and assessment for a range of health and social care programmes.

#### **Early years**

##### *Strengths*

- significant improvement in apprenticeship success rates
- good range of methods to collect assessment evidence

##### *Weaknesses*

- poor success rates for advanced apprenticeship frameworks
- insufficient development of learning opportunities

### **Achievement and standards**

24. N&B Training has achieved a marked improvement in overall apprenticeship success rates. Between 2003-04 and 2005-06 this success rate has improved from zero to 56 per cent and now compares favourably with the national average of 53 per cent. However, the current success rates for advanced apprenticeship frameworks are poor. Between 2003-04 and 2005-06 this success rate has improved from 22 per cent to 25 per cent, but is still significantly below the national average of 44 per cent. Between 2004-05 and 2005-06, success rates in the key skill of application of number at level 2 rose from 33 per cent to 63 per cent. Pass rates in those technical certificates subject to examination are very good. Changes have been implemented in the content, delivery and timing of each aspect of the frameworks, including key skills and technical certificates. Performances by apprentices improved immediately, but similar gains for advanced apprentices are not evident yet. Current learners are making satisfactory progress towards framework completion at both levels.

25. Learners clearly develop new skills in the delivery of education for young children,

and also an increased and effective understanding of childcare practice. Learners are more able to contribute to the creation of safe and secure early learning environments. Many of these skills are learnt in the workplace, but learners also develop broader perspectives and increased professional confidence through the provider's training. Learners produce well written and carefully organised portfolios which contain sound evidence of occupational competence.

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	44	50	55	23	27
		timely	*	*	*	*	*
	2004-05	overall	43	56	49	21	22
		timely	*	*	*	*	*
Apprenticeships	2003-04	overall	21	33	49	0	21
		timely	*	*	*	*	*
	2004-05	overall	40	50	53	23	36
		timely	*	*	*	*	*

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)).

\* indicates unreliable data.

### The quality of provision

26. A good range of methods is used to collect assessment evidence. All portfolios are well organised and contain examples of several different forms of assessment. These include observations of learners working with children, question/answer evidence, witness statements, reflective statements, documented researched tasks, and professional discussions. Learners understand the assessment process and are able to discuss it confidently, together with the evidence that has been collected. All learners are initially screened in order to identify their learning needs. Assessment methods are varied according to the individual and chosen carefully by the learner and the assessor to reflect learners' needs and their preferred style of collecting and submitting evidence.

27. Assessment and internal verification practices are satisfactory. Assessment is pre-planned and employers are always informed about what aspects are to be included. Considerable amounts of time and effort have been spent on the improvement of the internal verification system. This is now satisfactory, and the provider's new plans for the improved delivery of internal verification and assessment are sound. Four of the five assessors are also qualified as internal verifiers. Sampling activity is well structured and regular standardisation meetings ensure consistency of assessment and verification.

28. N&B Training's programmes meet the needs of learners and employers satisfactorily. Learners are well informed and clear about their aspirations. All of them want to become qualified childcare workers and their current training programmes are appropriate for these aspirations. Some learners are beginning to develop an interest in progressing in child-related careers, or in studying at a higher level. N&B Training has well-developed links with a wide range of local employers, some of whom were trained by N&B Training. The qualifications offered by N&B Training cover both established and new standards, and



provide nurseries with appropriate support to develop valuable childcare workers.

29. Assessor support for learners and nursery managers is satisfactory. Visits are made regularly and during each visit there is open discussion about the role of the nursery and the assessor in promoting the learners' progress. Assessors are readily accessible to learners between visits, ensuring that productive communication is a continuing process. Assessors provide a high level of encouragement to the learners, which is acknowledged by employers and learners.

30. Learners receive formal individual progress reviews every 12 weeks and action planning visits every four week. Contributions are encouraged from the employer, the learner and the assessor. Learners receive valuable written feedback about each review, and action plans are drawn up. Learners also receive extensive verbal feedback. They find these reviews helpful, particularly as N&B Training's assessors work well to ensure that learners have a clear picture of what has been achieved, and of the short-term targets that need to be reached by the time of the next assessment visit.

31. Learning opportunities are not developed sufficiently. Background knowledge for the technical certificate and for key skills is offered in two parallel formats. Learners are offered four, full-day off-the-job training sessions, three of which must be attended. Background knowledge and key skills training is also included as part of the regular, four-weekly, assessment visits to all learners. There are comprehensive lesson plans for the four training sessions, but they cover too much information in too short a space of time, and do not allow sufficient time for consolidation and for extension of understanding. Differentiation is not practised sufficiently. Few of the exercises planned for use in learning sessions offer sufficient challenge, especially for the more able learners. There are not enough opportunities for learners to develop analytical skills, and not enough guidance notes or work books are provided to supplement or substitute for training sessions. Planning for the delivery of the 7 to 16 age range curriculum has not yet resolved the challenge of providing this training to learners who do not work with this age group.

### **Leadership and management**

32. The training relationship between employers and N&B Training is satisfactory. The provider communicates with employers regularly and ensures that they understand what will be required for the planned assessments. Employers receive immediate feedback about the outcomes of the assessments and play an active role in reviewing learners' progress.

33. N&B Training responds positively when weaknesses are identified. A good example of this positive response has been an alteration in the sequence of completion of the elements of the framework. More apprentices can now complete all elements of their frameworks in a more logical way, and achieve some early success in the technical certificate. Internal verification has been reviewed, and is now more systematic and effective.

