

MONITORING VISIT: MAIN FINDINGS

Name of Provider: Span Training and Development Ltd
Date of visit: 8 July 2008

Context

This monitoring visit follows the inspection in September 2006 of Span Training Organisation (Span), at which the overall effectiveness of its provision was graded as satisfactory. Leadership and management were satisfactory, as was its arrangements for equality of opportunity and quality improvement. Provision was judged to be satisfactory in retail and commercial enterprise and hairdressing.

Span, based in Radley, Buckinghamshire, now operates as Span Training and Development Ltd. It contracts with Thames Valley Learning and Skills Council (LSC), formerly Milton Keynes, Oxfordshire and Buckinghamshire LSC, and Swindon and Wiltshire LSC. The organisation continues to provide work-based apprenticeship and advanced apprenticeship programmes to learners employed in hairdressing salons in Oxfordshire, Buckinghamshire, Wiltshire and Berkshire. Span provides all off-the-job training, support and guidance through its field services managers and trains employers as work-based assessors. Span has increased slightly its number of learners to around 300 since the previous inspection.

Achievement and standards

At the previous inspection overall success rates were satisfactory and improving. Has this steady improvement been maintained?	Significant progress
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At the time of the previous inspection overall success rates for all apprentices were satisfactory. Data showed that learners' achievements had steadily improved for three years and the proportion of learners achieving timely framework completion was increasing. Span Training has made steady and significant improvement from low national vocational qualification (NVQ) and framework success rates in 2004/05 to very good for the current year.

The improvement in overall and timely success rates has resulted in levels significantly higher than those achieved nationally for 2006/07, for example, an overall framework success rate of 75% compared with 51% nationally. Results so far for 2007/08 indicate that the trends in improved success rates are being maintained. Success rates for the advanced apprenticeships have improved to be outstanding with overall and timely success rates for 2007/08, so far, over 80%. Overall success rates for apprenticeship frameworks have also shown steady improvement, from 44% in 2004/05 to 54% so far achieved for 2007/08. Improvements in timely

success rates show a more significant increase from 14% in 2004/05 to 47% so far this year. Framework success rates across all programmes are similar to those for NVQ achievement indicating good and timely completion of key skills.

Quality of provision

How well are learners' literacy, numeracy, language and additional needs being supported?	Reasonable progress
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Arrangements for supporting learners' literacy, numeracy and language needs were satisfactory at the time of the previous inspection. However, initial assessment of skills had only recently been introduced and information on learners with additional learning needs was not adequately conveyed to all those involved in the training. Span has made reasonable progress in addressing the issues. The assessing and recording of information relating to learners' needs is more formalised and initial screening of learners is now routine. Diagnostic testing has not yet been introduced. Where appropriate, learners complete initial assessment tests and the findings are recorded and conveyed to staff. Greater awareness by staff of learners' needs enables them to provide more effective support for key skills. Learners receive adequate support for portfolio-building. However, no planned arrangements are in place to support learners' development of IT skills. Arrangements to provide additional support and guidance to learners whose progression falls behind learning plan targets are effective in enabling them to achieve. Procedures for sharing information on learners' additional needs have been improved. Staff work effectively in partnership with employers to provide support for learners with social and domestic issues. Field service managers make additional visits to workplaces and provide closer monitoring and guidance to help to overcome potential barriers to learning.

Have measures been introduced to ensure effective planning of practical training and key skills support in the salons?	Significant progress
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Previously, practical training in salons was not well planned or linked to off-the-job training and in some cases the recording of practical training was incomplete. Many learners completed key skills only late in their programmes and target-setting for key skills completion was not routine. Integration of practical and off-the-job training has improved significantly with the introduction of an integrated salon training form. The form is used to inform salons of Span's planned off-the-job training and outline suitable work activities to support the off-the-job sessions. Information includes benchmarking targets, projects and assignments as well as providing a system for recording training with comments. Salon staff are now fully aware of their responsibilities for ensuring that learners gain the necessary practical experience. Field staff use this document very effectively to support reviews in the salons. Span has introduced an effective grading system for salons that takes into account a range of criteria including the practical and timely achievement of learners. Recording of

learner progress in practical training has improved markedly and field service managers have good awareness of each learner's timely achievement. Salons receive good support material and guidance to assist learners with key skills. The achievement of key skills early in the programme is now good with salons and learners recognising their value. Better planning of key skills training has reduced significantly the proportion of learners completing key skills after completing the NVQ element of their programmes.

Leadership and management

What has been done to improve procedures for observing key aspects of learning?	Significant progress
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Observations of the key aspects of learning were insufficiently rigorous at the previous inspection. Systems for observation required further development and better implementation. Following an intensive in-house review after the previous inspection, good new arrangements for the observation of learning in the workplace and an improved recording system were introduced. There have been marked improvements in quality of practical training with more competent and confident trainers in the salons. Field staff have been comprehensively trained in carrying out lesson observations and using the supporting recording forms. A detailed lesson observation schedule ensures good sampling of trainers, particularly those not yet fully qualified as trainers or assessors. Sampling of lesson observation reports is an integral part of the Span quality assurance arrangements with a monthly lesson sampling schedule. Learning observations have been welcomed by trainers, coaches and salons who value the feedback greatly. In several instances learning observation feedback has stimulated good in-house development of teaching and the production of new training resource material. Salons have been risk graded for the standard of their training, a factor in the Span quality badging system based on overall salon performance across a range of criteria.

How effective are self-assessment and the arrangements for quality improvement introduced at the time of, and since, the previous inspection?	Significant progress
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Previously the self-assessment process was well established and involved all staff. Good use was made of feedback from learners and employers and inspectors were broadly confident in the reliability of the process. Quality improvement procedures were satisfactory, although many procedures were new and had yet to take full effect. The self-assessment process continues to be inclusive with good staff engagement at all stages. Departmental managers, many of whom are very experienced, are closely involved in the compilation of the report for their area of responsibility. Employers and learners contribute to the self-assessment process through the completion of evaluation surveys. Staff contribute to objective setting as part of the quality improvement plan and the monitoring of progress. New quality

improvement procedures have resulted in significant progress in a number of areas such as workplace practical training, the observation of learning, the piloting of on-line testing for key skills, a redesign of review forms and the better use of management information. Other changes have been introduced in administrative arrangements to improve the quality of service to learners. The introduction of a salon of the year competition and approved/preferred salon badging programme has been welcomed by salon staff. Internal staff training has been reviewed to improve introductory training for field staff.

<p>The collection and use of data for improving performance were judged to be good at the previous inspection. Have these good practices been maintained?</p>	<p>Significant progress</p>
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At the previous inspection a good range of data was being used to monitor and review performance. Systems to monitor learners' progress and achievement were also good. Span has made significant further improvement to systems for the collection and use of data. The monitoring and monitoring of learners' progress is very effective and computerised systems allow all staff remote access to up-to-date information on all learners. Information on learners' progress is up-loaded weekly onto laptops and used by field service managers for reviews when visiting learners at work. Information gives a complete overview of learners' progress in all aspects of their programmes. The improved systems are contributing to early identification of slow progression and triggering appropriate support interventions. Collected data is routinely analysed and used to prepare reports and briefings for discussion at staff meetings. The sharing of management information is leading to better co-ordination between fieldworkers and administration staff and staff have a greater awareness and understanding of the benefits of management information in pursuit of performance improvement. Enhanced data systems are being used well to generate monthly management reports to gauge company performance against set targets.