

REINSPECTION REPORT

Waltham Forest Chamber of Commerce Training Trust Reinspection

28 September 2005



ADULT LEARNING
INSPECTORATE

Grading

Inspectors use a four-point scale to summarise their judgements about the quality of learning sessions. The descriptors for the four grades are:

- *grade 1 - outstanding*
- *grade 2 - good*
- *grade 3 - satisfactory*
- *grade 4 - inadequate*

Inspectors use a five-point scale to summarise their judgements about the quality of provision in occupational/curriculum areas. The same scale is used to describe the quality of leadership and management, which includes quality assurance and equality of opportunity. The descriptors for the five grades are:

- *grade 1 - outstanding*
- *grade 2 - good*
- *grade 3 - satisfactory*
- *grade 4 - unsatisfactory*
- *grade 5 - very weak.*

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 over 16
- provision in further education colleges for people aged 19 and over
- the University for Industry's **learndirect** provision
- Adult and Community Learning
- learning and job preparation programmes funded by Jobcentre Plus
- education and training in prisons, at the invitation of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Prisons.

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.

REINSPECTION REPORT

Waltham Forest Chamber of Commerce Training Trust Reinspection

Contents

Summary

Description of the provider	1
Scope of provision	1
About the reinspection	2
Overall judgement	2
Grades	2
Key findings	4

Detailed reinspection findings

Leadership and management	7
Equality of opportunity	8
Quality assurance	9
Construction	11
Business administration, management & professional	14
Health, social care & public services	17

REINSPECTION REPORT

DESCRIPTION OF THE PROVIDER

1. Waltham Forest Chamber of Commerce Training Trust (the Trust) is a limited company and registered charity. It was set up in 1982 to provide training for young people in east and north London. All 17 staff work at offices in Gants Hill, Essex.

2. The trust contracts with the North London Learning and Skills Council to provide training in electrical and domestic installation, early years, business administration and motor vehicle. The trust is no longer recruiting learners in motor vehicle because it has not been able to find a good partner to provide off-the-job training. This area has very few learners and was not inspected. All learners attend off-the-job training for one day each week. Training and assessment in electrical and domestic installation are subcontracted to Newham College. Training and assessment in business administration and early years are provided in-house. All learners are employed and 89 per cent work in small firms of 11 employees or fewer.

SCOPE OF PROVISION

Construction

3. The trust offers two main construction programmes, electrical installation and domestic installation. Learners follow advanced apprenticeship, apprenticeship and national vocational qualification (NVQ) programmes. The trust gives new learners an induction and places unemployed learners with local employers. Learners attend Newham College on day release for off-the-job training. Staff at the trust co-ordinate on- and off-the-job training and review learners' progress every eight weeks. One hundred and twelve learners are on construction programmes. Thirty-two of these are on electrical installation programmes and 80 are on domestic installation programmes. Eighty are following apprenticeships at level 2.

Business administration, management & professional

4. Business administration was not inspected at the previous inspection because it had few learners. However, many recent improvements in business administration have been made in response to the previous inspection. This area of learning has 12 learners. Eleven are apprentices and one is taking an NVQ. The programme is provided by one assessor and one tutor. Learners work at various commercial and public sector employers and at the trust itself. Learners are assessed at work every four to six weeks and attend the training centre at Gants Hill one day each week for key skills and vocational skills training and training towards the technical certificate.

Health, social care & public services

5. Eleven learners are following work-based learning for young people in early years. Eight are apprentices and three are taking NVQs at level 2. All are women. The programmes are provided by one tutor and two part-time qualified assessors. Most of the learners attend work placements and a few are employed. The early years learners are training at six nurseries. Learners attend off-the-job training at the training centre for one day each week for the technical certificates and key skills. Progress reviews are done every eight weeks.

ABOUT THE REINSPECTION

Number of inspectors	6
Number of inspection days	21
Number of learners interviewed	44
Number of staff interviewed	26
Number of employers interviewed	6
Number of subcontractors interviewed	1
Number of locations/sites/learning centres visited	12

OVERALL JUDGEMENT

6. The quality of the provision is adequate to meet the reasonable needs of those receiving it. The previous inspection in July 2004 found equality of opportunity satisfactory and all other areas unsatisfactory. Business administration was not inspected because it had only a few learners. At the end of the reinspection, all areas were found to be satisfactory or better.

GRADES

grade 1 = outstanding, grade 2 = good, grade 3 = satisfactory, grade 4 = unsatisfactory, grade 5 = very weak

Grades awarded at previous inspection

Leadership and management	4
Contributory grades:	
Equality of opportunity	3
Quality assurance	4

WALTHAM FOREST CHAMBER OF COMMERCE TRAINING TRUST REINSPECTION

Construction		4
Contributory areas:	Number of learners	Contributory grade
Building services - Apprenticeships for young people	85	4

Engineering, technology & manufacturing		4
Contributory areas:	Number of learners	Contributory grade
Motor vehicle/cycle - Apprenticeships for young people	14	4
Other contributory areas - Apprenticeships for young people	5	None

Health, social care & public services		4
Contributory areas:	Number of learners	Contributory grade
Early years - Apprenticeships for young people	16	4

Grades awarded at reinspection

Leadership and management		2
Contributory grades:		
Equality of opportunity		3
Quality assurance		3

Construction		3
Contributory areas:	Number of learners	Contributory grade
Building services - Apprenticeships for young people	112	3

Business administration, management & professional		3
Contributory areas:	Number of learners	Contributory grade
Business administration		
- Apprenticeships for young people	11	3
- NVQ training for young people	1	3
Health, social care & public services		3
Contributory areas:	Number of learners	Contributory grade
Early years		
- Apprenticeships for young people	8	3
- NVQ training for young people	3	3

KEY FINDINGS

Achievement and standards

7. **Retention rates are good in early years and excellent in business administration. However, learners in both areas of learning are making slow progress towards their apprenticeship frameworks.** Many learners have been in training for some time but have completed few NVQ units. Achievement rates are also poor for key skills in business administration and the technical certificate in early years. However, target-setting and monitoring have improved and learners are making better progress now. **In construction, retention rates are satisfactory and completion rates are improving.** Apprentices who started in 2004-05 are making good progress towards completing their frameworks.

Quality of education and training

8. **Learners receive good support from training staff and employers in all areas of learning.** Staff are easy to contact and approach for help. Learners who are at risk of falling behind or leaving their training are given much support. Individual tutoring is effective. Communication is good between trainers and employers, who work closely together. Pastoral support is very effective in early years. Employers in business administration are particularly effective at supporting learners.

9. **Learners in business administration find it difficult to start their training and to make progress because there are too few work placements.** The trust has recognised the problem but has been slow to deal with it. The latest intake of business administration learners have had their training delayed.

10. **In domestic and electrical installation, initial assessment is inadequate.** It includes no

vocationally specific diagnostic tests and the results are not used to arrange suitable additional learning support. The trust is aware of this weakness and is piloting a scheme to remedy it.

Leadership and management

11. **At the previous inspection, the management of construction was ineffective.** It is now good. All the key weaknesses from the previous inspection have been put right. The trust has introduced new measures of improvement. Achievement rates are improving.

12. **There is clear strategic management of improvement.** The trust has a clear management structure with agreed roles and responsibilities. Since the previous inspection, the trust has introduced a range of quality improvement measures to focus the efforts of staff on learners. Learners' experience has improved greatly.

13. **Lines of communication are very effective at all levels, both within the trust and with outside partners.** The trust has introduced a cycle of planned meetings to share ideas, knowledge and information.

14. **The trust has good recruitment procedures to encourage participation by learners from a wide range of backgrounds.** All stages of recruitment are monitored to ensure a consistent approach and to improve opportunities for learners to achieve. Many unsuccessful applicants are given individual advice and guidance to help them review their options.

15. **At the previous inspection, self-assessment was insufficiently self-critical.** Since then, new arrangements have been introduced. Self-assessment and quality improvement are now thorough and carefully planned. All staff are fully involved at each stage. The reinspection findings were very similar to the findings reached by self-assessment. Arrangements for internal verification are satisfactory.

16. **There is insufficient co-ordination of support for learners with additional learning needs.** Procedures are informal and the support focuses on passing key skills tests. Staff do not sufficiently understand key skills and learners' needs for support with literacy, numeracy and language. The trust is aware of this weakness and is introducing improvements.

Leadership and management

Strengths

- clear strategic management of improvement
- very effective lines of communication
- thorough self-assessment
- good recruitment procedures for widening participation

Weaknesses

- insufficient co-ordination of additional learning support

Construction

Building services

Strengths

- good support for all learners
- good management of learning

Weaknesses

- insufficient initial assessment

Business administration, management & professional

Business administration

Strengths

- excellent retention rates
- strong support from employers for learners

Weaknesses

- slow completion of apprenticeship frameworks
- insufficient work placements

Health, social care & public services

Early years

Strengths

- good retention rates
- very effective pastoral support for individual learners

Weaknesses

- slow progress towards qualifications

DETAILED REINSPECTION FINDING

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

Grade 2

Strengths

- clear strategic management of improvement
- very effective lines of communication
- thorough self-assessment
- good recruitment procedures for widening participation

Weaknesses

- insufficient co-ordination of additional learning support

17. There is clear strategic management of improvement. The trust has a clear management structure with agreed roles and responsibilities. A mission statement committing the trust to providing good-quality training is included in its three-year business plan. Strategic plans are followed to ensure financial stability. Central to these is the provision of good-quality training. A three-year development plan sets out goals for improving training. Since the previous inspection, the trust has introduced a range of quality improvement measures to focus the efforts of staff on the learners.

18. There is very effective communication within the trust and with outside partners. The trust has improved internal communication and continued the good communication with employers identified at the previous inspection. It has introduced a cycle of planned meetings for different groups to share ideas, knowledge and information. Each group has a clear membership and written terms of reference defining its purpose and goals. The trust has introduced open evenings for parents and employers. These have proved popular. There is good communication between managers and the board of trustees and the trust takes the initiative in networking with local business forums and support organisations and other local training providers. Communication with the subcontracted college has improved. Day-to-day communication with the college is now good. The trust's liaison officers and operations manager visit the college frequently. Meetings are held with staff at the college each term.

19. The management of resources is satisfactory. Arrangements for staff appraisal are satisfactory. Staff have yearly appraisals and six-monthly reviews. These arrangements are reviewed each year and are being revised in preparation for Investors in People reassessment. Investors in People is a national standard for improving an organisation's performance through its people. Continuing professional development is planned and meets the needs of both the business and the individual. The trust publicises a yearly programme of training events as well as meeting requests from individual staff. The findings of classroom observations are used in the yearly staff appraisals.

20. The analysis of data was insufficient at the previous inspection. Since then, the trust has greatly improved its systems for collecting and using data. It now collects data on learners' achievement and progression. This is discussed at staff and senior management team meetings. Quality improvement measures now include arrangements for collecting feedback from employers and others involved in training. This information is used for self-assessment and action-planning.

21. The trust recognises that support for learners with additional learning needs is inadequately co-ordinated. It has no procedures that clearly state learners' entitlement to support. Most support focuses on passing key skills tests. Most staff find it difficult to distinguish between key skills and literacy, numeracy and language. They support some learners and monitor their progress. However, the results of initial assessment are not clearly linked to individual learning plans and progress reviews. The trust is devising better systems for initial assessment, the planning of additional support and the monitoring of progress. However, these have not yet been fully introduced and it is too soon to assess their effect.

Equality of opportunity

Contributory grade 3

22. The trust is in a multicultural district of northeast London and has clear equality and diversity policies and procedures. It has good recruitment procedures that aim to widen participation. Marketing materials reflect the local population and encourage young people to enter non-traditional vocations. The trust monitors all enquiries, applications and initial assessments to ensure a consistent approach and measures its progress against targets to widen participation and improve opportunities for achievement. It has recently introduced advice sessions to assist unsuccessful applicants in reviewing their options. Applicants have been supported in applying to other training providers and dealing with social problems. Some applicants who were unsuccessful originally have been admitted to the trust after having their literacy and numeracy reassessed.

23. Learners and staff have a satisfactory awareness of equality and diversity. Awareness has improved since the previous inspection, when it was a key weakness. The trust has developed its coverage of equality of opportunity at induction. All learners are familiar with the complaints procedures and understand their rights and responsibilities. Learners are now given a reference booklet. They refer to the booklet in progress reviews, when different aspects of equality of opportunity are discussed. Staff are improving their understanding of equality of opportunity and have access to suitable resources. Staff have received training in equality of opportunity, which is discussed regularly at staff meetings. Staff record discussions of equality of opportunity at progress reviews. However, the trust has no records of the effectiveness of these discussions. Employers are sent questionnaires to ensure that they are complying with the current law on equality of opportunity. Few employers respond to the questionnaires but many employers are involved in learners' progress reviews.

24. There is much respect between staff and learners. When learners have problems, the trust responds quickly and supports them well. Since the previous inspection, the trust has introduced a register of learners who are at risk of leaving their programmes

and staff have been aware of individual difficulties. The monitoring of subcontractors is satisfactory and learners with mobility difficulties have satisfactory access to subcontractors' premises. However, access is unsatisfactory at the trust's own premises in Gants Hill. Arrangements for learners with additional learning needs are not always followed.

25. The trust has recruited more learners from minority ethnic groups and the profile of learners and staff reflects the local population. The trust collects and analyses much data on learners' retention and achievement by gender, ethnicity and disability. However, some data is inconclusive and achievement has not been compared at area of learning level. Too little is done in response to the findings. For example, no action was taken when NVQ achievement rates were found to be much lower for white learners than for learners from minority ethnic groups.

Quality assurance

Contributory grade 3

26. At the previous inspection, self-assessment was insufficiently self-critical. Since then new arrangements have been introduced. Self-assessment and quality improvement are now thorough and carefully planned. All staff are fully involved at each stage. Evidence for the self-assessment report is gathered from learners, employers and staff, who feel fully involved. Self-assessment takes place throughout the year. The reinspection findings were very similar to the trust's findings. The development plan includes actions to put right weaknesses identified during self-assessment. The trust has made improvements in the areas of key challenge identified at the previous inspection.

27. Arrangements to assure quality were incomplete at the previous inspection. A new quality framework has been established. This includes a yearly cycle of procedures to improve quality. The trust has well-written policies, procedures and guidance for most aspects of provision. The quality improvement plan is thorough and reflects the findings of self-assessment. It gives details of required actions, together with dates, responsibilities and measures of success. A quality group now meets monthly to review quality arrangements. However, the first cycle of the new measures has not been completed and the potential improvements have not been fully achieved.

28. The trust has good arrangements for continuous quality improvement. It has introduced new procedures for setting targets and monitoring learners' progress. It keeps an 'at risk' register identifying learners who might find it difficult to succeed on their programmes. Liaison officers set targets for learners, such as dates for achieving the key skills qualifications. The apprenticeship completion rate has greatly improved since the previous inspection. However, some learners are making slow progress in two of the areas of learning.

29. The trust has satisfactory arrangements for assuring the quality of subcontracted provision. Monitoring of the college has improved since the previous inspection. A revised contract lists the trust's expectations of the subcontractor and provides greater management control. The trust has become more directly involved in managing the training in electrical and domestic installation. Liaison officers visit the subcontractor

WALTHAM FOREST CHAMBER OF COMMERCE TRAINING TRUST REINSPECTION

weekly to monitor learners' progress and discuss their training with tutors. The trust now co-ordinates key skills training and manages learners' assessment schedules to ensure they achieve their qualifications by the target dates. The operations manager visits the college frequently and has established co-operative relations with its staff. However, the subcontractor does not provide systematic information about its management of the programmes. For example, it does not always provide the trust with classroom observation reports or information about changes to the programme.

30. The trust has clear procedures for observing teaching sessions and progress reviews. All staff are observed twice a year as part of a planned programme. Observed sessions are graded and feedback is given to staff, which they find useful. However, many of the records of observation do not identify areas for improvement, even for sessions graded only satisfactory. The paperwork for observations does not allow for the monitoring of performance over time.

31. Arrangements for internal verification are satisfactory. External verifiers' reports express satisfaction with the procedures. The assessors and internal verifiers meet regularly to standardise their practice. Internal verification is well planned and adequately covers assessment activities. New arrangements have been introduced for monitoring learners' progress. These are quick to detect when learners have not completed scheduled assessments, final tests or portfolios. However, some learners are still not completing their programmes on target.

AREAS OF LEARNING

Construction

Construction		3
Contributory areas:	Number of learners	Contributory grade
Building services - Apprenticeships for young people	112	3

Building services

Strengths

- good support for all learners
- good management of learning

Weaknesses

- insufficient initial assessment

Achievement and standards

32. The apprenticeship completion rate is improving. The retention rate is satisfactory. At the previous inspection, no learners had completed the framework and many were making slow progress. By the end of the reinspection, 46 per cent of the learners who had started in 2002-03 and 48 per cent of the learners who had started in 2003-04 had completed their apprenticeship frameworks. Learners recruited in 2004-05 were making good progress towards completing their frameworks.

33. At the previous inspection, rates of achievement of key skills qualifications and technical certificates were unsatisfactory. The rate of key skills achievement has now improved. Key skills training is now integrated with off-the-job training. Learners understand that they must achieve key skills qualifications. They are now encouraged to take all external tests and complete their portfolios in their first year of training. All second-year learners have achieved the key skills qualifications.

34. Learners produce satisfactory work in practical lessons and in the workplace. Learners gain confidence during the training. Since the previous inspection, 32 learners have moved on from apprenticeships to advanced apprenticeships.

Quality of education and training

35. Learners receive good support. Individual tutoring helps most learners to stay motivated and make progress. Learners' future options are fully discussed. Staff from the trust visit the subcontracted college every week and have arranged extra tuition for

WALTHAM FOREST CHAMBER OF COMMERCE TRAINING TRUST REINSPECTION

learners. This has included preparation for examinations, preparation for employment and English for speakers of other languages. Communication between liaison officers and the learners is good. Work placements are found for many learners who do not have jobs or who have left their employers. Since the previous inspection, an 'at risk' register has been introduced identifying learners who are falling behind with their training. Learners value the personal support offered by the trust's staff and are pleased to recommend the training to others.

36. Teaching and learning are satisfactory. Classes in background knowledge are well managed. Tutors use a variety of teaching methods. Learners are engaged and contribute in lessons. Tutors regularly check their learning. Tutors have good knowledge of their subjects and use suitable vocational language. No learner received additional learning support during the classes observed by inspectors. Some of the worksheets given to learners do not specify clearly what is required. Most training is linked to activities at work.

37. Resources are satisfactory. Learners have opportunities to develop a good range of practical skills at work. All staff have recently received training and development directly linked to improving learners' experience. However, some staff lack technical understanding. The college has recently opened new classrooms and workshops. However, the workshops are cluttered and not yet fully equipped and the classrooms are not vocationally specific and have few visual aids and posters to stimulate learners. Background knowledge lessons are held near to noisy workshop activities. Learners with mobility difficulties can use all areas of the new workshops. Learners can use computers at college for portfolio work. Some learners do not wear protective equipment.

38. The work in learners' portfolios is satisfactory. Learners keep a site diary. This is regularly reviewed by assessors, who give constructive feedback. However, some work has not been reviewed and some completed units have not been signed off. The portfolios include risk assessments for most activities. Learners in domestic installation produce a good range of evidence for their portfolios and show good occupational knowledge. Internal verification is satisfactory. Central monitoring of learners' progress is good but some learners' portfolios are not used to monitor progress effectively.

39. Induction and progress reviews are satisfactory. Learners' progress is reviewed regularly. Learners, employers and college staff are involved in setting targets for the learners. The targets are reviewed and progress against them is recorded. Each progress review is used to raise awareness of equality of opportunity and health and safety and the results are recorded.

40. Initial assessment is inadequate. Different programmes do not have different entry criteria. Initial assessment is not used to identify suitable additional learning support and there are no vocationally specific diagnostic tests. The trust has recognised this weakness and is piloting improved arrangements.

Leadership and management

41. The management of construction programmes has greatly improved since the previous inspection and is now good. A wide range of measures has been taken to improve learners' experience. Staff plan work-based assessments for the NVQ and arrange for learners to achieve their key skills qualifications. There is good monitoring of progress towards completing all parts of the apprenticeship framework. Internal verification is satisfactory. There is good communication between the trust and the subcontracted college at both management and operational level. Links between on- and off-the-job training are strong. Learners who leave early are contacted and asked why they have left. Many of the planned quality improvements have not yet been introduced fully. Promotion of equality and diversity has improved and is satisfactory.

42. All staff contributed to the self-assessment report through staff meetings and discussions with line managers. Employers and learners are consulted on how the service could be improved. The findings of the inspection related closely to the self-assessment report.

Business administration, management & professional

Business administration, management & professional		3
Contributory areas:	Number of learners	Contributory grade
<i>Business administration</i>		
- Apprenticeships for young people	11	3
- NVQ training for young people	1	3

Business administration*Strengths*

- excellent retention rates
- strong support from employers for learners

Weaknesses

- slow completion of apprenticeship frameworks
- insufficient work placements

Achievement and standards

43. Retention rates are excellent. Since 2003-04, the retention rate for learners in administration has been 100 per cent. Learners are well motivated and enjoy working towards their qualifications. Learners' social and vocational skills are developed effectively. Attendance at work and at the training centre is monitored closely. Learners produce satisfactory work.

44. Learners make slow progress towards completing their frameworks. Most learners achieve their technical certificates within the time planned but make slow progress towards their NVQs and key skills qualifications. Seven learners have been on the programme for more than 12 months but have achieved few NVQ units and none of the required elements of their key skills qualifications. Since the previous inspection, however, new arrangements have been made for setting targets, reviewing progress and planning assessment. Learners are now making better progress towards completing units but it is too soon to assess the effect of the new measures on framework completion.

Quality of education and training

45. Employers provide strong support for learners. They have a good understanding of learners' training. They are given detailed information about learners' programmes. Some employers use this to provide support that ties in with learners' development of vocational skills. Employers are given a pack with helpful information about the apprenticeship and advice on supporting learners in the workplace. Surveys are used to gather employers' views on the optional units in administration and the results are used

to plan training. At some employers, there are good links between learners' on- and off-the-job training.

46. Employers play an important role in learners' progress reviews. They work with assessors to expand learners' roles at work to encourage the development of vocational skills. For example, an employer has adjusted the roles of existing staff to enable one learner to develop new skills and pursue a particular career. Employers value the vocational skills developed by learners and 83 per cent of learners are taken on as employees.

47. Training is satisfactory. Learners attend the training centre for one day each week and enjoy the training sessions. Off-the-job training is very well organised and is effectively planned and evaluated. Learners have suitable learning resources for developing their vocational skills. Training is particularly effective in enabling learners to achieve their technical certificates. The training room is equipped to industry standards and there are sufficient computers with internet access.

48. The work in learners' portfolios is satisfactory. Evidence includes witness testimony, observations of assessment and oral questioning. Assessors are suitably qualified and have a good knowledge of current administration practice and assessment strategies. Assessments are well planned. Induction is satisfactory. Learners have a good understanding of the qualifications they are working towards and have a good knowledge of policies and procedures for health and safety, equality of opportunity and appeals.

49. The trust has an effective system for monitoring learners' progress and good arrangements to identify learners who are at risk of leaving. Learners receive good support at the training centre. Special arrangements are made to assess and support learners who are unable to attend the training centre because of work commitments. Progress reviews are satisfactory and happen every eight weeks. Assessors, learners and employers agree clear, specific and realistic targets. A rating scale is used by employers and learners to evaluate learners' progress and the effectiveness of the progress reviews. Learners' understanding of health and safety and equality and diversity is regularly checked at reviews. Initial assessment is satisfactory. Learners take diagnostic tests of their key skills and their literacy, numeracy and language skills. The results of the tests are explained to learners. Learners who are identified as having additional learning needs are given support in group and individual sessions. Arrangements for support with literacy are good but arrangements for support with numeracy are not fully developed.

50. There are too few work placements. Two of the current learners had no work placements when they started the programme and one has had only three work-based assessments since starting the programme 12 months ago. The start of a new programme has been delayed because of a lack of work placements and some learners who plan to join the programme do not yet have placements. The trust has not devoted sufficient resources to making more work placements available. Although it is trying to arrange more work placements, it is not doing enough.

Leadership and management

51. Many improvements have been made since the previous inspection. Internal verification is well organised. The internal verifier is well qualified and very experienced. Written feedback to the assessor is too descriptive. Although evaluative feedback is given orally, no record is kept. The internal verifier provides good support to an inexperienced assessor.

52. Awareness of equality and diversity is satisfactory. Communication between staff and management is good. Meetings are held with learners and employers to discuss how the programme can be improved. Regular meetings are held to monitor the progress of learners, especially those who are considered at risk of leaving early. All staff contributed to self-assessment. The self-assessment report was self-critical and closely reflected the findings of the inspection.

Health, social care & public services

Health, social care & public services		3
Contributory areas:	Number of learners	Contributory grade
Early years		
- Apprenticeships for young people	8	3
- NVQ training for young people	3	3

Early years*Strengths*

- good retention rates
- very effective pastoral support for individual learners

Weaknesses

- slow progress towards qualifications

Achievement and standards

53. Retention rates are good and have improved since the previous inspection. Of the learners enrolled in 2004-05, 79 per cent are still in learning. Of the nine learners who started apprenticeships, eight are still in training. Of the five who started NVQs at level 2, three are still in training.

54. Learners' work is satisfactory. Most learners' files are well organised and show a developing understanding of a wide range of childcare issues. Learners are able to make effective links between theory and practice and frequently bring examples of their work with children into their childcare lessons. They gain a range of experience at work and workplace supervisors are satisfied with their practical work with children.

55. Learners are making slow progress. Two learners who have been in training for at least nine months have not achieved any units. Another three learners who have been in training for the same time have achieved only one unit. None of the current learners have achieved any of the key skills units. Since the previous inspection, however, the trust has made much progress in improving the achievement of learners who had been on the programme for a long time. Two of these have achieved qualifications at level 2 and seven have achieved qualifications at level 3. A further three have achieved the full apprenticeship framework.

Quality of education and training

56. Pastoral support for individual learners is very effective. Staff help learners from a range of backgrounds to resolve personal problems and develop their confidence. Learners' progress is reviewed regularly and detailed feedback is given to them. Learners feel that the staff are approachable and will take the time to listen to them and help them with their difficulties. Since the previous inspection, the trust has introduced an 'at risk' register identifying learners whose progress requires careful monitoring. Links with employers are effective in supporting learners. Staff communicate regularly with workplace supervisors and make weekly phone calls to monitor learners' progress. Assessors have built up supportive relationships. Absence from training or the workplace is promptly reported.

57. Teaching is satisfactory. Learners who have additional learning needs are supported by an additional member of staff who attends the afternoon sessions. However, training in key skills is not sufficiently integrated with the rest of learners' training. Initial assessment of literacy and numeracy does not guide the planning of additional learning support. Some learners do receive individual support but this focuses on the key skills application of number examination.

58. Resources are satisfactory. Learners are encouraged to borrow childcare textbooks to complete their assignments and can choose from a small selection of relevant videos. Learners use nine networked computers and can use the internet for research. In one lesson, learners used the internet to find out employment opportunities. Staff have suitable vocational qualifications and experience. However, they have difficulty in providing specialist support for learners requiring key skills training. They also have difficulty in providing guidance about employment rights and responsibilities.

59. Assessment is satisfactory. Arrangements for work-based assessment have improved since the previous inspection. All learners have assessment plans and confidently communicate assessment timings and requirements to their workplace supervisors. A range of assessment methods is used and learners have a good understanding of the requirements for evidence. Portfolios are satisfactory, although some of the paperwork required by the awarding body is incomplete. The trust has had its direct claims status restored by the awarding body after carrying out actions required by the external verifier.

Leadership and management

60. Arrangements to assure quality have improved since the previous inspection and achievement rates have improved. Internal verification is satisfactory and meets the requirements of the awarding body. However, internal verification of learners' NVQ units does not always happen at the right time.

61. Arrangements to ensure equality of opportunity are satisfactory. Awareness of equality of opportunity is reinforced at learners' progress reviews every eight weeks. During progress reviews, assessors discuss different aspects of equality and diversity. Learners are also encouraged to promote equality in their work at the nurseries.

62. Staff receive good support from management to develop their training skills and have contributed to the self-assessment report. The strengths and weaknesses of the self-assessment report closely matched those of the inspection findings.