



TRAINING STANDARDS COUNCIL

INSPECTION REPORT JUNE 1998

REINSPECTION REPORT NOVEMBER 1999

GDN Childcare Training Centre

SUMMARY

GDN Childcare Training Centre offers satisfactory training in childcare, with well-qualified and occupationally experienced staff. Innovative methods are used to promote equality of opportunity among children. Trainee support is satisfactory, although initial assessment of trainees is poor. There is little accreditation of prior learning. Training is managed by a well-established team with good internal communications. Staff are effectively deployed. At the time of the first inspection, quality assurance arrangements were unsatisfactory. Following reinspection, the company's quality assurance system is now effective. Staff are aware of and use the quality assurance procedures. Data on achievements and trainees' destinations are routinely monitored and analysed. Feedback from trainees, staff and employers is used to identify areas for improvement, although there are few targets for continuous improvement.

As a result of the reinspection of GDN Childcare Training Centre, the original published report text for quality assurance has been replaced by new text which makes reference to the original inspection findings. This summary page, the overall report introduction and the inspection findings introduction have also been amended to reflect the findings of the reinspection. All other sections of the original published report, which have not been subject to full reinspection, have been left in their original form.

GRADES

OCCUPATIONAL AREAS	GRADE
Health, care & public services	3

GENERIC AREAS	GRADE
Equal opportunities	3
Trainee support	3
Management of training	3
Quality assurance	4

REINSPECTION	GRADE
Quality assurance	3

KEY STRENGTHS

- ◆ well-planned and -delivered off-the-job training
- ◆ innovative methods to promote equal opportunities
- ◆ regular staff appraisal and training
- ◆ efficient deployment of staff

KEY WEAKNESSES

- ◆ poor co-ordination of on- and off-the-job training and assessment
- ◆ trainees, employers and some trainers unaware of key skills
- ◆ no targets for programmes' completion
- ◆ employers sometimes unaware of trainees' progress
- ◆ equal opportunities data not used to set targets for improvement

INTRODUCTION

1. GDN Childcare Training Centre (GDN) is part of Greenfields Day Nurseries Limited. It is a family business, which was established in 1985. Greenfields Day Nurseries Limited has three divisions: nurseries and after-school care service; national vocational qualification (NVQ) training and assessment; and an inspection service for nurseries which contracts with the Office for Standards in Education (OFSTED). The company runs a training centre, with one large training room and two small offices in Salford, and operates three day nurseries in Wigan. One of the nurseries in Wigan has a training room. There is one full-time and one part-time trainer at the training centre and one part-time trainer based at one of the company's nurseries. The trainers are all qualified assessors. There are also four qualified work-based assessors in the company's nurseries. Many of the company's staff work across all three divisions.

2. The company has three contracts with Manchester Training and Enterprise Council (TEC) to provide modern apprenticeships and other work-based training and prevocational programmes in childcare for young people. GDN also has a contract with Manchester TEC to provide other training programmes for adults leading to NVQs at levels 2 and 3 in childcare. At the time of the original inspection, GDN had a contract with a local college to provide off-the-job training and assessment for adult trainees. The contract with the college expired in July 1999 and has not been renewed. There were 52 government-funded trainees at the time of the first inspection. Twenty-five were on the modern apprenticeship programme, five were on another work-based training programme and 22 were from the college. There are now 38 government-funded trainees: 21 on the modern apprenticeship programme, one on another work-based training programme for young people, 11 on the prevocational programme and five trainees on other work-based training programmes for adults. Trainees are placed or employed in one of Greenfields' own day nurseries, with other private nurseries or in local education authority schools around Manchester, Salford, Wigan and Bolton. Since 1997, 58 per cent of trainees on the modern apprenticeship programme who have left GDN have completed their programmes, while a further 16 per cent have obtained an NVQ at level 2 but not gone on to complete their training. GDN Childcare has a contract with the City Pride Partnership to provide the New Deal full-time education and training option in childcare for trainees aged 18-24. There are five trainees on this programme.

3. Most trainees live within the Manchester, Salford and Wigan areas. Manchester's most common areas of business activity are transport, communications, banking, finance and manufacturing. Over recent years, childcare training has been given a high profile and there has been a growth in childcare places nationally. In Wigan alone, the number of childcare places has risen by over 50 per cent in the last four years. This trend is reflected in all the areas in which the company operates. In 1998, the percentage of school leavers achieving five or more



general certificates of secondary education (GCSEs) at grade C and above was 33.3 per cent in Salford and 43.2 per cent in Wigan, compared with the national average of 46.3 per cent. In 1999, it was 34.1 per cent in Salford and 45.7 per cent in Wigan, compared with the national average of 46.7 per cent. In September 1999, unemployment in the Manchester TEC area is 5.9 per cent and in Wigan it is 6.6 per cent, compared with the national average of 4.2 per cent. The proportion of the population in the Manchester and Salford area from a minority ethnic background is 7.3 per cent and in the Wigan area it is 0.8 per cent.

INSPECTION FINDINGS

4. GDN produced its original self-assessment report six months before the first inspection. The report was produced by the training centre's manager and did not identify any weaknesses in some of the aspects set out in *Raising the Standard*, but did include plans for improvement and continuous development in all areas. Following the approval of its post-inspection action plan, GDN has addressed the issues raised in the inspection report. A short report identifying the actions taken in fulfilling the action plan was submitted prior to reinspection. The report identified the actions taken over all aspects of its training, not just those related to quality assurance.

5. During the first inspection, a team of four inspectors spent a total of 15 days at GDN in June 1998. Inspectors interviewed 30 trainees, as well as employers, managers, trainers and assessors. They observed three assessments and two training sessions. The documents reviewed included trainees' files, assessment portfolios, contracts, auditors' reports and those of the awarding bodies, minutes of the training staff's meetings, training programmes, individual training plans, internal verifiers' reports and company policies and procedures.

6. Reinspection was carried out by a team of two inspectors over a total of four days in November 1999. Inspectors interviewed 14 trainees, four workplace supervisors and three members of staff, and observed one training session and one assessment. Trainees' personal files and assessment portfolios, contracts, the company's policies and procedures, internal audit reports, management files and reports from external bodies were also examined.

OCCUPATIONAL AREAS

Health, care & public services

Grade 3

7. GDN Childcare Training has 52 trainees in this area, 25 of whom are modern apprentices, five are on another youth training scheme and 22 are students from Wigan and Leigh College. All trainees are working towards national vocational qualifications (NVQs) at levels 2 and 3 in either early years care and education or the former childcare and education awards. Trainees work with children in day nurseries, play schools, crèches and schools. Two trainees work as childminders and one as a nanny. Over 95 per cent of trainees are employed. The company's self-assessment report identified no weaknesses. The grade awarded by inspectors was lower than that proposed in the self-assessment report.

STRENGTHS

- ◆ good on- and off-the-job training
- ◆ good work placements
- ◆ good working relationships among the company, employers and trainees
- ◆ well-qualified and appropriately deployed staff

WEAKNESSES

- ◆ poor co-ordination of on- and off-the-job training and assessment
- ◆ trainees, employers and some trainers are unaware of key skills requirements
- ◆ trainees' personal development plans sometimes do not reflect individual needs
- ◆ targets for programme completion not set
- ◆ employers sometimes unaware of trainees' progress

8. All trainees receive a good induction at the commencement of training. It serves to inform them of the requirements of the qualification towards which they are working. Off-the-job training takes place weekly, at either the company's own training centre or Wigan and Leigh College. Training is well managed and stimulating. Short-term placements are available for those trainees who need to gain additional experience or further assessment opportunities. Trainees employed in the company's own nurseries achieve their qualifications more quickly than those who work elsewhere. Greenfields' own trainees have access to workplace assessors who are able to accredit new skills as soon as they are gained. Assessors from GDN Childcare Training Centre are allocated to trainees when they join. Many employers do not receive feedback on their trainees' progress. Some employers have little contact with tutors from GDN Childcare Training Centre. Most trainees have little or no understanding of key skills, even when these form a mandatory part of their programmes. Key skills are integrated in the NVQ programme, but, with the exception of information technology, assessment of key skills takes place without trainees' knowing.

GENERIC AREAS

Equal opportunities

Grade 3

9. GDN Childcare Training Centre has an equal opportunities policy of which its staff are aware. The policy statement is made available to trainees and employers and is clearly displayed on the company's premises. Implementation of the policy and its associated procedures has not been monitored or routinely analysed but, following self-assessment, the company has designed a questionnaire for employers and has begun to analyse the results. The equal opportunities agreement for employers has also been extended. The company found no weaknesses in this area

of its work and overgraded it. The grade awarded by inspectors was lower than that proposed in the self-assessment report.

STRENGTHS

- ◆ equal opportunities emphasised during training
- ◆ employers agree formally to implement the company's policy
- ◆ innovative methods are used to promote equal opportunities

WEAKNESSES

- ◆ no evaluation or review of equal opportunities policy
- ◆ no monitoring or analysis of data
- ◆ no use of targets to raise performance

10. GDN Childcare Training Centre holds monthly meetings of staff and trainees. Ideas for raising issues of equality of opportunity with children are discussed and any staff training needs raised. Equal opportunity issues are discussed regularly with trainees during off-the-job training. The company requires trainers and employers to sign a statement of agreement that they will actively support and implement its equal opportunities policy and practices. Staff go to the Bolton Multi-Cultural Centre for training in the racial aspects of equal opportunities. They receive regular newsletters from this centre and have access to a variety of toys, books and dressing-up clothes to introduce children to the customs of people from other countries. Displays in the nurseries show people in non-stereotypical work roles, as well as those with disabilities. Children in the company's nurseries have the opportunity to try food from different countries. Staff and trainees are not formally analysed by gender, age, ethnicity or disability. Attempts have been made to target young males for recruitment. There is a comprehensive complaints procedure. The company is sensitive to equal opportunity issues, but it could achieve more by adopting some more formal aspects of good practice.

Trainee support

Grade 3

11. All trainees receive a thorough induction which makes them aware of the qualifications towards which they are working. All potential trainees are interviewed. There is a comprehensive trainee handbook. An assessor and a workplace mentor are allocated to trainees when they join. Trainees have monthly portfolio reviews and, additionally, a three-monthly review of their experience and progression.

STRENGTHS

- ◆ responsibility for trainee support is clear
- ◆ high level of some aspects of trainee support
- ◆ trainees feel well supported

WEAKNESSES

- ◆ inadequate initial assessment
- ◆ trainee review process lacks rigour
- ◆ limited use of accreditation of prior learning

12. Trainees' reviews provide an opportunity for good pastoral support. Initial assessment of trainees' basic skills is weak, with additional support requirements frequently identified after the programme's start. The use of accreditation of prior learning is limited, with trainees often repeating work unnecessarily. Transport is provided for those trainees who attend off-the-job training in the evenings. Staff are aware of their roles and responsibilities and frequently offer to help trainees in their own time. Where trainees require additional experience or assessment, special work placements are arranged for them.

Management of training

Grade 3

13. The company is managed by a senior team of seven people, assisted by six nursery staff. All staff carry out a variety of jobs. The range of programmes has significantly increased in the last year. Expansion has prompted a move to new premises and recruitment of an additional member of staff. The company encourages internal promotion among staff, and posts are advertised externally only where there are no internal applicants or where new skills are required. Staff turnover is low. Staff are committed and happy working for the company. Inspectors agreed with the grade proposed in the company's self-assessment report.

STRENGTHS

- ◆ a well-established staff team
- ◆ Greenfields' staff have clearly defined jobs
- ◆ effective and efficient deployment of staff
- ◆ regular assessor and staff meetings
- ◆ staff are regularly appraised

WEAKNESSES

- ◆ poor management information
- ◆ workplace supervisors sometimes unaware of responsibilities
- ◆ weak monitoring of work placements and employers
- ◆ communication with employers sometimes ineffective

14. Staff are well qualified and occupationally competent. The management structure and staff roles are clear and understood by all staff. There are informal, but excellent, internal lines of communication. Staff meetings are held monthly, but their outcomes are sometimes not recorded. There is an open management style, where each individual's contribution is welcomed. The small size of the organisation lends itself to a degree of informality, without loss of efficiency. Meetings of assessors, which are held quarterly, are well attended. Staff training is held monthly and is well attended. Senior managers seek the views of staff, responding positively to suggestions. There are no documented procedures for staff appraisal or professional development, but staff are appraised annually. Their training needs are reviewed monthly. A handbook is issued to all the employers working with the company, outlining all aspects of the NVQ programme. However, many employers remain unaware of their role in training. Some employers have been visited by company staff only occasionally, and it is in these locations that awareness of trainees' needs is poorest. These employers are also not clear of the centre's policy and procedures. There is no comprehensive management-information system. The main weaknesses of management are those of communication with, and control over, bodies which subcontract with the company.

Quality assurance

Grade 3

15. GDN has a written quality assurance system covering all the key aspects of the organisation which meets TEC and awarding body requirements. Procedures for monitoring the system's implementation and reviewing its effectiveness are included. The managing director holds the appropriate internal verifier award and is responsible for quality assurance. Since the original inspection, a senior manager has been trained as an internal verifier and now holds the appropriate qualification. The internal verification procedures meet the requirements of the awarding body. Trainees' achievements are monitored at frequent intervals. Feedback from trainees, employers and GDN's staff is obtained at regular intervals through interviews and questionnaires. The results are analysed and discussed at the regular management and staff meetings. Employers are sent the results of the employer questionnaires. The destinations of trainees who leave their training programmes before completion are monitored and analysed.

At the original inspection, the main weaknesses identified were:

- ◆ some staff unaware of policies and procedures
- ◆ lack of analysis of trainees' achievements and destinations

16. Inspectors found that the weaknesses identified in the original inspection report have now been addressed. The self-assessment report does not contain a full assessment of quality assurance, but a grade is given on the basis of the work done against the action plan. This grade is the same as that awarded by inspectors following reinspection.

STRENGTHS

- ◆ clear and concise policies and procedures
- ◆ thorough internal audits and reviews of procedures
- ◆ effective use of feedback from trainees, staff and employers

WEAKNESSES

- ◆ little target-setting for continuous improvement
- ◆ self-assessment process not integrated into quality assurance system

GOOD PRACTICE

This is an example of continuous improvement. Originally, the procedure used for gathering evidence to assess trainees' knowledge and understanding of their work was based on a verbal question and answer session. Following a review of the procedure, it became project-based, with trainees preparing their own written evidence. The new procedure was used for three months. During this trial period, trainees' progress slowed down. A revised procedure has since been introduced that combines question and answer with some project work. The balance is adjusted for each individual trainee.

17. The company has a set of quality assurance procedures which are clear and concise. The procedures cover all the essential aspects of training, assessment and verification. Staff have copies of the appropriate procedures and refer to them. There is a thorough internal audit system to monitor adherence to the procedures. The managing director and the training centre manager carry out the audits on a frequent basis. The results are recorded, areas of non-compliance identified and corrective actions taken. The procedures are reviewed on a regular basis. Managers and staff contribute to improvements in the procedures. Regular feedback is obtained from trainees, staff and employers. The results are analysed and used as a basis for identifying improvements. For example, an initiative identified by employers regarding a potential benefit for training towards desirable learning outcomes for level 2 as well as level 3 trainees was quickly introduced. The implementation of the action plan produced as a result of the original inspection is on schedule. The weaknesses identified during the original inspection have been addressed satisfactorily. Staff are aware of policies and procedures, and trainees' achievements and destinations are regularly monitored.

18. Many of the new quality assurance procedures have not been in place for a sufficient length of time for any benefits to be identified. Key performance criteria covering the effectiveness of the training provided are not defined. Although some, such as achievement, retention, progression and trainees' satisfaction, are monitored, few targets for continuous improvement are set. There are no targets for recruitment or achievement of under-represented groups. Action plans are



developed to address specific issues as they are identified. There has been no update or reassessment of the action plan arising from the original inspection. Self-assessment does not form the foundation of the company's quality assurance system. Some of the elements of the quality framework defined in *Raising the Standard* are not covered by the quality assurance system. There are no procedures covering the self-assessment process. Staff contribute to self-assessment, although the report itself is prepared by senior managers. For the reinspection, GDN Childcare prepared a short report identifying the work done towards the post-inspection action plan. The report refers to supporting evidence, some of which is contained within the report. Self-assessment is regarded as an annual event, complementary to, but outside, the company's quality assurance programme. The organisation is not sufficiently self-critical. When issues that adversely affect the quality of the training are identified, they are addressed promptly and effectively. However, this process is not forward looking. There is no rigorous assessment of the various aspects of the programmes to determine their effectiveness with respect to the quality framework. The company does not use the available local or national performance statistics as indicators for assessing the effectiveness of its own work.