

INSPECTION REPORT

**Margaret McAtomey
Associates**

04 September 2001



ADULT LEARNING
INSPECTORATE

Grading

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

- *grade 1 - excellent*
- *grade 2 - very good*
- *grade 3 - good*
- *grade 4 - satisfactory*
- *grade 5 - unsatisfactory*
- *grade 6 - poor*
- *grade 7 - very poor.*

Inspectors use a five-point scale to summarise their judgements about the quality of provision in occupational/curriculum areas and in New Deal options. 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.*

The two grading scales relate to each other as follows:

SEVEN-POINT SCALE	FIVE-POINT SCALE
grade 1	grade 1
grade 2	
grade 3	grade 2
grade 4	grade 3
grade 5	grade 4
grade 6	grade 5
grade 7	

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 training within the remit of a single inspectorate. The ALI is responsible for inspecting a wide range of government-funded learning, including:

- work-based training for all people over 16
- provision in further education colleges for people aged 19 and over
- the University for Industry's *learnirect* provision
- adult and community learning
- training given by the Employment Service under the New Deals.

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.

Inadequate provision

A provider's provision will normally be deemed to be less than adequate where

- one third or more of published grades for occupational/curriculum areas and New Deal options are judged less than satisfactory, or
- leadership and management are judged to be less than satisfactory

The final decision as to whether the provision is inadequate rests with the Chief Inspector of Adult Learning. The overall judgement as to whether the provision is adequate or inadequate is included in the summary section of the inspection report.

SUMMARY

The provider

Margaret McAtomey Associates was formed in 1993. It is a sole trader business managed by its owner manager and based in Walsall. It trains learners across the West Midlands with the main concentration of learners in south Birmingham and Solihull. Margaret McAtomey Associates offers foundation and advanced modern apprenticeships in care.

Overall judgement

The quality of the provision is adequate to meet the reasonable needs of those receiving it. The training in care and Margaret McAtomey Associates' leadership and management are good.

Work-based learning for young people

Work-based training for the 22 modern apprentices training in care is good. They all work for suitable employers in the West Midlands. There is a good range of assessment practices. Induction is well organised and thorough. There are good arrangements for off-the-job training. Learners are clear about the structure of their training and they are involved in setting their own clear and realistic learning targets. Effective use is made of work-related projects to develop learners' knowledge. Learners have good opportunities to achieve additional qualifications. Internal verification is good. Most learners make good progress. Retention is good. There is some slow progress in achievement of the modern apprenticeship frameworks. Initial assessment is satisfactory and learners receive good personal support, but they are not given information about external support agencies. Key skills training is introduced late.

Leadership and management

The leadership and management of training and equal opportunities arrangements at Margaret McAtomey Associates are good. There is effective business planning and staff fully understand their roles and responsibilities. There is good co-ordination of on- and off-the-job training. The quality assurance process is satisfactory. However, there is not enough monitoring of quality assurance procedures.

GRADES

Health, social care & public services	2
Contributory grades:	
Work-based learning for young people	2

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

KEY STRENGTHS

- well-managed training
- flexible response to learners and employers' training needs
- effective equal opportunities training for learners
- good retention rates

KEY WEAKNESSES

- slow achievement of the modern apprenticeship framework
- late introduction of key skills training
- incomplete monitoring of quality assurance procedures

OTHER IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED

- better attendance at training sessions
- evaluation of feedback from employers
- better initial assessment arrangements

THE PROVIDER AND ITS CONTEXT

1. Margaret McAtominey Associates (MMc) is a business which has been run by a sole trader since July 1993. It is based in Walsall in the West Midlands, and most of its learners are from south Birmingham and Solihull. It contracts with the Birmingham and Solihull Learning and Skills Council (LSC) to provide modern apprenticeship in care. It can also provide training for national vocational qualifications (NVQs) in cleaning science at levels 1 and 2, training and development awards at levels 3 and 4, assessor awards and NVQs in management at levels 3, 4 and 5. It also has a collaborative partnership arrangement with a local college for training people over 25 years of age. Most modern apprentices are employed within the care sector. Two learners are currently on work placements and are awaiting full employment. MMc also provides training development and business services for organisations in the private and public sectors. There are currently 22 modern apprentices all of whom are following the care training. Two directors, five part-time tutors, five visiting assessors and 49 work-based assessors support the owner-manager, who is the main board director. The main board director has responsibility for the development and provision of the training programme. The second director has responsibility for administration and the third director manages the implementation of health and safety measures. One key skills co-ordinator organises the integration of key skills training with the vocational training.

2. Unemployment was 5.7 per cent in Birmingham and 2.4 per cent in Solihull in June 2001. The national average was 3 per cent. In Birmingham, 21.5 per cent of the population is from minority ethnic groups according to the 1991 census, far higher than the national average of 6.2 per cent. In 2000 the proportion of school leavers gaining five or more GCSEs at grade C and above was 40.8 per cent, below the national average of 49.2 per cent. In Solihull however, the proportion was 55.1 per cent. It is estimated that 17 per cent of the population of Birmingham have low levels of literacy, 23 per cent have low levels of numeracy and 15 per cent have low skill levels. However, 46 per cent of all employees are qualified to level 3 NVQ or its equivalent. Only Solihull (49 per cent) and Warwickshire (47 per cent) have higher proportions.

THE INSPECTION

3. A team of three inspectors spent a total of nine days with MMc during September 2001. Seven staff interviews were carried out. Inspectors visited 11 work placements and interviewed six employers or supervisors. They also interviewed eleven learners and examined nine portfolios. Two training assessments were observed. A wide range of documents was examined, including the results of initial assessments, individual learning plans, learners' portfolios and reviews of training, assessment and progress. Documents concerning leadership and management were examined including health and safety, equal opportunities and quality assurance policies, minutes of meetings and achievement data. Inspectors also read MMc's self-assessment report, which was produced in November 2000 and updated in April 2001.

Grades awarded to learning sessions

	Grade 1	Grade 2	Grade 3	Grade 4	Grade 5	Grade 6	Grade 7	Total
Health, social care & public services	0	2	0	0	0	0	0	2
Total	0	2	0	0	0	0	0	2

OCCUPATIONAL AREAS

Health, social care & public services

Grade 2

Programmes inspected	Number of learners	Contributory grade
Work-based learning for young people	22	2

4. MMc offers foundation and advanced modern apprenticeships in care. Learners are working towards NVQs in care at levels 2 and 3 and key skills qualifications. There are currently 22 learners. Twelve are advanced modern apprentices and the other 10 are foundation modern apprentices. Most learners are referred to MMc by their employer and all those who apply are interviewed. Learners work in hospitals, hospices, community centres and nursing and residential homes, where most training and assessment takes place. All workplaces receive a safety check by the MMc health and safety officer. Learners may join the training programme at any appropriate time. They are expected to complete the advanced modern apprenticeship in two years. Off-the-job training takes place at training centres throughout the West Midlands. Foundation and key skills training is offered for half a day each week. Advanced modern apprentices have the opportunity to attend monthly off-the-job training sessions. All assessment takes place in the workplace and most learners have an assessor at work. MMc's staff or contracted visiting assessors visit workplaces without the work-based assessors to carry out certain assessments. Another member of staff visits workplaces to review learners' progress. One current learner has basic skills needs.

The following tables show the achievement and retention rates available up to the time of inspection.

Work-based learning for young people										
Foundation modern apprenticeships (FMA)	1997-98		1998-99		1999-2000		2000-01		2001-02	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
	Number that started					3		12		6
Still in training					1	33	4	33	5	83
FMA framework completed					1	33	1	8	0	0
NVQ level 2 completed					3	100	7	58	0	0
Left without completing the framework					2	67	5	42	1	17

Work-based learning for young people										
Advanced modern apprenticeships (AMA)										
	1997-98		1998-99		1999-2000		2000-01		2001-02	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Number that started					2		13		5	
Still in training					0	0	7	54	5	100
AMA framework completed					1	50	1	8	0	0
Left without completing the framework					1	50	5	38	0	0

STRENGTHS

- well-structured training
- flexible response to learners and employers' training needs
- good retention rates
- clear understanding of progression routes

WEAKNESSES

- late introduction of key skills training
- slow achievement of modern apprenticeship framework

OTHER IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED

- better attendance at key skills training sessions
- more referring of learners to external agencies when necessary

5. Training sessions are well-structured and relevant to the work learners are doing and to their qualifications. Each learner is given project work to do for their NVQ. MMc makes clear which training sessions learners need to have attended before they should start work on a project. The project work provides evidence of learners' understanding of theory and also of the different decisions they might make if they were working in a different care setting. MMc ensures that the external trainers it uses to run its training sessions are well qualified and experienced. They are all experienced NHS trainers, who run the training department at the local NHS trust. They are also practising nurses and qualified assessors and internal verifiers. Each trainer takes responsibility for units specific to their expertise. For example, nurse managers teach about management of staff and resources and ward-based nurses teach about planning and assisting with personal care. Learners may take away materials used during training sessions to use for

independent study and to help with their project work. There is a published timetable of the subjects which will be covered at each session. Assessors at MMc make maximum use of every assessment opportunity and learners progress well through their NVQs. Assessments are well planned and good use is made of a range of appropriate assessment methods to provide evidence for many units. Learners receive concise feedback on their performance, including what work they have to complete for their remaining NVQ units and how this links to the training sessions.

6. MMc has an innovative and flexible approach to providing training sessions for all its learners. MMc provides well-equipped training rooms at two locations. This substantially reduces the amount of time learners spend travelling and away from the workplace. Learners are able to attend training sessions which are nearby and which fit with their shift patterns. MMc makes considerable efforts to provide individual coaching for those learners who do not attend the timetabled off-the-job training sessions, or who need to check their understanding of work from a previous session. MMc has a good relationship with many care employers in the West Midlands. These employers value training and provide learners with a wide variety of good training opportunities. Learners are confident in their work. Most employers give learners and assessors time at work to work for their NVQ. Some employers provide additional clinical training days on topics such as promoting continence, medication, and preventing pressure damage. Informal pastoral support is available for learners which could help them with specific problems. However, learners are not referred to specialist external agencies for example, health and financial advice or counselling. Details of useful contacts are not currently included in learners' induction. The induction programme is well organised and thorough. Induction takes place when a new group of learners has been identified and MMc's ensure that they meet each learner at work before the induction.

7. The retention rate is good, as identified by MMc in their self-assessment report. Retention for both the foundation and advanced modern apprenticeships has increased significantly over the past three years. All those advanced modern apprentices recruited in 2001-02 and 83 per cent of those recruited on to the foundation modern apprenticeship remain in training.

8. Learners have a clear understanding of the career opportunities available to them after they have completed their modern apprenticeships. Several learners have started nursing courses after their training with MMc and others have gone on to higher education. Learners are aware that these and other possibilities are available to them, but they are also realistic about the demands these options would put on them.

9. Delays in learners' achievement of key skills qualifications has affected their achievement of their modern apprenticeship frameworks. Achievement of NVQs on foundation modern apprenticeships has been good, but there have been delays in achieving the full frameworks. MMc provide good opportunities for learners to complete their training programme once they are over 25 and their LSC funding has finished. MMc is currently supporting three such learners whose funding has finished.

10. Key skills training has been introduced late in the learners' training. Many who have completed a level 2 NVQ have still had no training or assessment of key skills. Although some employers would be able to offer computer facilities for learners to complete some of their key skills assignments, MMc has not tried to arrange this. New learners are having their key skills work integrated with their other project work, but this has only recently started. MMc offers separate training sessions on key skills and individual tuition with a key skills trainer, but many of the learners do not yet appreciate the importance of key skills and attendance at these training sessions has been poor.

Good Practice

Four learners in one workplace have completed a level 2 NVQ and have been appointed team leaders at work. The employer has supported them well, given them good support in their training and has made arrangements for them to complete a 12-day supervisory management course to enhance their understanding of their roles and provide valuable evidence for the management units of their level 3 NVQ.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

Grade 2

11. MMc has three main board directors. Two of them are full-time and are involved in the day-to-day running of the training. The third director attends the annual board meetings and delivers health and safety training but is not directly involved in MMc's operations. Five assessors and five care tutors work part time for MMc and MMc also uses 49 work-based assessors. There is also a key skills co-ordinator. All directors and most of MMc's staff are self-employed. One member of staff is a full-time employee. MMc has employment contracts for all assessors. As well as managing the business, the two full-time directors act as assessors and internal verifiers. MMc has a mission statement and a business plan. The two directors meet weekly. Staff receive training. MMc has a quality assurance policy and a set of quality assurance procedures. There is also an equal opportunities policy. MMc produced its first self-assessment report in November 2000, based on 'Raising the Standard' the Training Standards Council's quality assurance framework. This was updated in April 2001.

STRENGTHS

- clear and comprehensive business planning
- well-managed training
- detailed understanding of equal opportunities by learners
- continuous improvement of learning materials

WEAKNESSES

- incomplete monitoring of quality assurance procedures

OTHER IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED

- better arrangements for on-the-job access to computers
- evaluation of feedback from employers
- better initial assessment arrangements

12. MMc's business planning process is open and consultative. The self-assessment report action plan has clear links to the business plan objectives. Information is gathered from a range of different sources as a basis for the business plan including feedback from staff, learners and employers. At the weekly management meetings there are reports on progress towards the targets in the self-assessment report action plan. Although the outcomes of meetings are not always formally recorded, there are clear and effective internal and external communications. The two full-time directors meet regularly with assessors, employers and learners. The board meets annually and its decisions are well recorded and influence the business plan. The two full-time directors have good productive links with employers and many external agencies.

13. Management of the training programmes is good. All assessors are invited to twice-

yearly staff meetings. The directors carefully plan these meetings for different dates and venues to ensure that all assessors are able to attend. All assessors are clear about their roles and responsibilities. Assessors receive regular communications about changes to the training. MMc encourages and supports employers in gaining their assessor qualifications. The directors meet the assessor and the learner regularly at the progress review meetings every eight weeks. The training processes and procedures are good. There are regular training sessions and updates for assessors and the assessors know that they can speak to the managers at any time. MMc collects data by computerised and paper-based methods which meet its own needs and those of the external agencies with whom it works. The training information produced is both timely and accurate but it is not always used to help identify potential concerns with the training programme.

14. Training centres used for the off-the-job training are thoroughly checked for compliance with health and safety regulations and suitability for training. They are chosen with consideration for learners' needs, and are close to public transport routes. Learners deliberately decide to wait to attend MMc's training rather than go to other training organisations. The directors carefully identify the most suitable assessors and staff to deliver training and assessment. There are laptop computers and printers available to help learners complete their projects and key skills assignments. However, many learners do not have access to computers at work to use for their key skills. Well-planned and useful training materials are produced to help learners with the knowledge and understanding requirements of their qualifications.

Equality of opportunity

Contributory grade 2

15. MMc has an equal opportunities policy and a statement explaining it, which each learner receives in their introductory pack. The proportion of modern apprentices from minority ethnic groups is approximately double that of the local population. There are no learners with disabilities, although a small number have additional learning needs. The premises which are hired for training sessions would not be accessible to people using wheelchairs, but MMc is aware of this and is able to make alternative arrangements if the need arises. There is a clear complaints and harassment procedure. All learners receive this at Induction and MMc's staff spend time explaining it by using workplace examples.

16. Because learners are all working towards NVQs in care, they have to carry out work on diversity and equality matters for their NVQs. They find the work challenging, but interesting, and all learners are clear about how their clients' rights should be respected, even if a client is not capable of expressing their wishes. Learners are not only well informed, but also confident about their knowledge and their ability to put it into practice.

17. Learners were all clear that they had equality of opportunity explained to them during their induction. They could remember that they had also discussed harassment and bullying in the workplace. MMc has two well-planned and carefully prepared training sessions during the induction, one on equality issues generally, including prejudice and discrimination, and another specifically on workplace harassment. Learners working in care homes can be vulnerable not only to abuse, but also to accusations of abuse. They need to be clear about their rights and responsibilities when working with a variety of client groups. The employers and MMc receive regular reports from the workplace supervisors and mentors on how the learners promote equal opportunities in their daily duties. This is used as evidence for the learners' NVQs. This work is monitored well through internal verification and equal opportunities generally is monitored at regular meetings with the learners and the employers. There are clear records on the monitoring of equal opportunities. MMc has been particularly active in analysing recruitment levels in care training for minority ethnic groups.

18. Nearly all the modern apprentices are young women. MMc works positively with the employers to promote the recruitment of men and other learners from non-traditional backgrounds to work in care. Two of MMc's staff are from a minority ethnic group, as are some of the work-based assessors. All staff receive equal opportunities training, which is monitored by MMc's directors.

19. Although the training materials used for equal opportunities training are well-prepared and detailed, the lesson plans have not been revised to include references to, or details of, the Disability Discrimination Act 1995. Plans to update them have slipped because of the illness of the member of staff responsible. However, there are written notes for learners which interpret the Act in the context of specific disabilities such as blindness.

Quality assurance**Contributory grade 3**

20. MMC has a range of effective quality assurance policies and practices, which help to guide assessors in their training activities. The policies are clearly defined and range from the roles and responsibilities of the assessors to good practice associated with assessment, internal verification and learners' reviews. The range of policies and practices fits the small scale of MMC's business. The arrangements give a clear direction to assessors.

21. Work-based and visiting assessors are invited to comment on MMC's learning materials as part of its quality assurance arrangements. If they identify problems, they work together to suggest improvements. One project was causing difficulty to several learners, so the assessors used one of their regular meetings to work on improving the training materials. The project is now much easier for learners and assessors to understand.

22. There is a well established system for obtaining feedback from learners about their training. MMC evaluates the feedback and a summary is produced and necessary action taken. For example, when some learners found some of the questions set in their workbooks difficult to understand, MMC worked with them and the assessors to revise the wording. Learners now find that they can progress more quickly with their work and MMC has ensured that the standards of work have been maintained. However, MMC has only just started to collect feedback from employers. Employers' response is not yet known.

23. Arrangements for internal verification are comprehensive and effective. Internal verifiers review a range of assessment practices including assessment by observation in the workplace, portfolio assessment and witness testimony. Written feedback from verifiers to assessors is constructive and seeks to improve assessment methods, learning materials and the training overall. MMC carries out internal verification throughout the time learners are in training. Assessment practices are good and assessors use an appropriate range of methods.

24. While there are many good documents about assuring the quality of the training programme, the monitoring of procedures is often incomplete. For example, observations of assessment take place for internal verification purposes, but the results of these are only recorded for those assessors taking their assessor qualifications. There is limited review of the training as a whole to consider if the procedures in place are helping to improve learners' retention and achievement. Initial assessment procedures are incomplete and unclear. This is partly due to MMC's decision to reduce its reliance on the external initial assessment arrangements it had used previously.

25. The self-assessment report includes some useful description of the training. Some of the strengths and weaknesses were not considered to be significant by the inspectors while others were identified by the inspectors which were not in the self-assessment report. The strengths and weaknesses in the self-assessment report did not identify the evidence on which the judgements were made, although the updated action plan did.

MARGARET MCATOMINEY ASSOCIATES

The action plan was updated before the inspection. The two full-time directors produced the self-assessment report and this was distributed to the other director and assessors for comment before publication.

Good Practice

During an induction session, a group of learners were asked to say how long they had been working in the care sector. The tutor then added up the total number of years the group had spent in the sector. She then discussed their overall contribution to the sector and the impact that they had made both as a group and as individuals. The learners said how much this had helped them to realise their worth and future potential.