

# INSPECTION REPORT

## **Barber Bird Ltd**

**25 November 2002**



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 Jobcentre Plus programmes. 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
- **learnirect** provision
- Adult and Community Learning
- training funded by Jobcentre Plus
- education and training in prisons, at the invitation of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Prisons.

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.

## Overall judgement

In those cases where the overall judgement is that the provision is adequate, only those aspects of the provision which are less than satisfactory will be reinspected.

Provision will normally be deemed to be inadequate where:

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

This provision will be subject to a full reinspection.

The final decision as to whether the provision is inadequate rests with the Chief Inspector of Adult Learning. A statement as to whether the provision is adequate or not is included in the summary section of the inspection report.



## SUMMARY

### The provider

Barber Bird Limited is a private limited company based in Rotherham, which provides work-based learning for 62 young people in hairdressing. Learners are placed in 35 salons within a fifteen mile radius of the training centre. The company offers foundation and advanced modern apprenticeships and national vocational qualifications (NVQs) at levels 1, 2 and 3. Barber Bird Limited is funded by the South Yorkshire Learning and Skills Council.

### Overall judgement

The overall quality of provision is adequate to meet the reasonable needs of those receiving it. The leadership and management of Barber Bird Limited are satisfactory, as are its arrangements for equality of opportunity. Its quality assurance is unsatisfactory. The quality of work-based learning in hairdressing is satisfactory.

### GRADES

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

| Hairdressing & beauty therapy        | 3 |
|--------------------------------------|---|
| Contributory grades:                 |   |
| Work-based learning for young people | 3 |

### KEY STRENGTHS

- good support for learners
- good quality learners' portfolios of evidence

### KEY WEAKNESSES

- insufficiently systematic approach to quality assurance
- slow progress by some learners

## THE INSPECTION

1. A team of four inspectors spent a total of 16 days at Barber Bird Limited (Barber Bird) in November 2002. They interviewed five employers and 29 learners, and conducted 14 interviews with members of staff. They observed seven learning sessions, and examined 33 individual learning plans and 22 portfolios of evidence. Other documents were examined, including policies and procedures for equality of opportunity and quality assurance, advertising brochures, learners' packs, minutes of meetings, data, Barber Bird's mission statement and its strategic plan. Barber Bird published its first self-assessment report in 1999, and has produced one annually since then. Its most recent was published in April 2002 and revised in August 2002. The report described the management of the company and identified some of the strengths and weaknesses found during the inspection.

Grades awarded to learning sessions

|                               | Grade 1  | Grade 2  | Grade 3  | Grade 4  | Grade 5  | Grade 6  | Grade 7  | Total    |
|-------------------------------|----------|----------|----------|----------|----------|----------|----------|----------|
| Hairdressing & beauty therapy | 0        | 1        | 1        | 3        | 2        | 0        | 0        | 7        |
| <b>Total</b>                  | <b>0</b> | <b>1</b> | <b>1</b> | <b>3</b> | <b>2</b> | <b>0</b> | <b>0</b> | <b>7</b> |

## THE PROVIDER AS A WHOLE

### Context

2. Barber Bird is a registered company based in Rotherham in Yorkshire. It employs three full-time and three part-time staff, two of whom were trained by the company. There are 62 learners. Two are on customer service programmes, and were not included in the inspection because there were too few of them. Sixty learners are on foundation and advanced modern apprenticeships or NVQ programmes in hairdressing. Training takes place on the job, or at Barber Bird's training centre. The company has a contract with South Yorkshire Learning and Skills Council (LSC).

3. The Rotherham area is characterised by social and economic deprivation. In May 2002, the unemployment rates in Rotherham was 4.8 per cent compared with the national average of 3 per cent. At the time of the 1991 census, the proportion of people from minority ethnic groups in Rotherham was 2 per cent compared with a national average of 6.2 per cent. In 2001, 43 per cent of school leavers in Rotherham achieved five or more general certificates of secondary education (GCSEs) at grade C or above, compared with 47.9 per cent nationally.

### Work-based learning for young people

4. Achievement rates on Barber Bird's hairdressing programmes are satisfactory. Barber Bird trains seven advanced modern apprentices, 17 foundation modern apprentices and 36 NVQ learners. More than half have additional learning needs. Fifty-eight per cent are employed. Retention and achievement rate are satisfactory, although some learners make slow progress. Learners benefit from good support in most workplaces. Off-the-job training at Barber Bird's training centre is good. The facilities in the centre are up-to-date and appropriate. There is satisfactory achievement in basic skills.

## LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

Grade 3

5. Barber Bird's joint owners act as managing director and centre manager. The managing director is responsible for the company's strategic direction, marketing and financial management. The centre manager, assisted by the training manager, runs the company's day-to-day activities, including training, assessment and internal verification. There are three part-time assessors who are working towards their assessors' awards, and one full-time assessor. The company has an equal opportunities policy and an appeals procedure. There is a quality assurance policy, and a series of procedures covering all aspects of training and assessment. Barber Bird has carried out annual self-assessment since April 1999. The latest self-assessment report was written in April 2002, and updated in August 2002 in preparation for inspection.

### STRENGTHS

- highly productive relationships with external organisations
- highly inclusive learning culture

### WEAKNESSES

- insufficiently focused promotion of equality of opportunity
- insufficiently systematic approach to quality assurance
- ineffective evaluation of learners' and employers' views

### OTHER IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED

- clearer targets in staff appraisals
- more detailed recording of some minutes
- better monitoring of salons to reinforce equality of opportunity

6. Barber Bird's managers liaise effectively with a range of external agencies. They have particularly good relationships with secondary schools in the area. Six schools send pupils to Barber Bird for training as part of a local initiative aimed at encouraging disaffected young people to enter work-based learning. These schools, and the staff involved with the initiative, value Barber Bird highly. The company's managers have recently established useful links with a local organisation which trains ex-offenders and other vulnerable people. Barber Bird has a partnership arrangement with the Connexions service, and works closely with Connexions personal advisers. New advisers are invited to the training centre to meet staff, and to see how the company operates. This promotes good relationships. There is effective liaison between Barber Bird and the LSC. Barber Bird's managers maintain strong links with the hairdressing industry, and the managing director regularly attends meetings of the National Hairdressing Federation.

7. Barber Bird has a satisfactory annual appraisal system, which includes a detailed evaluation of employees' strengths, the areas in which they might improve, and the contribution they have made to the company since their previous appraisal. Staff are set development targets during their appraisal. Managers and assessors carry out an appropriate amount of relevant staff development. Some part-time staff are working towards assessors' and verifiers' awards, while managers have attended recent courses on equality of opportunity, dyslexia awareness and internal verification. Although employees and their line managers are clear about what has been agreed during the appraisal, the recording of some targets lacks detail.

8. The arrangements for formal communication within the company are appropriate for its size. The three managers meet once a quarter, as do assessors. The staff involved in teaching and assessing key skills also meet regularly. The minutes of the meetings provide an adequate summary of the issues discussed and the decisions taken. In some cases, however, matters arising are not routinely discussed, and action points are not clearly stated. There is regular, effective informal communication among staff. Employees are clear about their roles and their lines of accountability. They share a strong commitment to the aims and objectives of the company.

9. Barber Bird's strategic plan is well focused, with clearly stated and appropriate objectives relating both to contractual issues and to the development of training. The timescales for these objectives are recorded on a separate action plan. Managers meet annually to set targets for achievement and retention rates, and for equality of opportunity. These are based on a realistic assessment of the current position, and are adequate for the needs of the company.

10. Barber Bird has adequate arrangements for the collection and use of management information. Data are gathered on starters, leavers and achievers in line with LSC requirements. Managers analyse these, and have used them to identify trends. Some actions have been taken in response to the findings. For example, approximately ten per cent of learners leave their programme early each year because they are pregnant. In response to this, Barber Bird has run optional talks on contraception, and has made a supply of condoms available to learners.

## Equality of opportunity

## Contributory grade 3

11. Barber Bird has a highly inclusive learning culture. There are good strategies for engaging young people through links with schools, and there are also some firm links with community groups. The company is involved in a local initiative to motivate and direct disaffected young people aged 14-19. As a result, some young learners who may have had difficulty in gaining qualifications at school have started attending the centre for one day a week and are enrolled on a level 1 NVQ programme.

12. There is good staff awareness of some of the broader issues of equality of opportunity, particularly in the local context. Staff are highly responsive to the problems encountered by young people and actively support them, for example, by maintaining unfunded learners on programme, offering help with financial problems and accompanying young people when they face difficult situations. Young people with problems or potential problems are actively welcomed into learning with Barber Bird, and the current learner profile reflects this. More than 50 per cent of learners have additional learning or social needs. Learners have a good general understanding of equality of opportunity. They feel able to approach Barber Bird's staff, in the knowledge that they will be taken seriously and supported. All work-placement salons are required to have an equal opportunities policy, and this is often based on Barber Bird's model. These policies are monitored informally through the learners. This leaves scope for problems to be missed. When a problem is identified, it is dealt with informally as far as possible. However, Barber Bird intervenes strongly on behalf of learners, and has, on occasion, broken relations with an employer to protect learners' interests. There is a formal complaints procedure, but it has not yet been used.

13. Barber Bird's promotion of equality of opportunity is insufficiently focused. The equal opportunities policy does not refer to all current legislation. Two members of staff have received some training in equality of opportunity and diversity, but there is no system for disseminating knowledge more widely. The equal opportunities policy is discussed briefly with learners at induction, and a copy is included in the learners' packs. However, there is no system to reinforce equality of opportunity at learners' progress reviews. Data on equality are collected and analysed, but the results do not form the basis of policy or action for targeting specific groups. For example, there is no focused advertising material to challenge the perception of hairdressing as a career exclusively for women. One of the main obstacles to learners completing their programmes is the high percentage of unplanned pregnancies. There have been some attempts to deal with this by making condoms available and running optional workshops. However, there is no strategy to produce information, discussions or sources of help for all learners. Advertising materials are distributed in the free press and on buses. However, positive images are not used to encourage specific groups to learn with Barber Bird. There has been a well-intentioned move to use members of different cultural groups to provide informal interpreters for learners, but serious implications for confidentiality and anonymity have not been taken into account. Similarly, advertising brochures are being translated into different languages, though no research has been carried out to ascertain whether there is a need for this.

**Quality assurance****Contributory grade 4**

14. Some aspects of Barber Bird's quality assurance system are unsystematic. This weakness is acknowledged in the self-assessment report. There are policies for most aspects of training and assessment. These are well understood by the company's managers, and are explained to new members of staff. However, some of the policies lack detail. The guidance on learners' progress reviews does not state how often reviews must be carried out. Few of the policies are dated. The policies do not provide sufficient guidance to assure quality, or to ensure that all learners benefit from a consistent experience.

15. Barber Bird's managers carry out audits throughout the year. They look carefully at the relevant policy, and at other documents, and decide if they need amending. The process is thorough. However, the outcome is not recorded, and there is no planned programme to ensure that all relevant aspects of provision are audited. It is not possible to track amendments from one audit to the next, or to ensure that all the identified shortcomings have been dealt with. The company's printed materials are generally well presented, but some have typographical errors which have not been picked up through internal audit, or through other quality assurance processes. This provides a poor role model for learners, some of whom have basic skills needs, or are working towards key skills units. The performance of training staff is observed informally by managers, who also observe on-the-job learning when they visit learners in the workplace. The outcomes of these observations are fed back informally, but not in writing. There is regular internal verification, but the sampling plan lacks detail. Assessors receive written and verbal feedback when portfolio work is internally verified. However, on the advice of the external verifier, no written feedback is given after the internal verification of observed assessment. Although assessors receive a verbal evaluation of how they have performed, the lack of structured written feedback on their strengths and what they need to change makes it difficult for assessors to improve their practice. Assessment is sound, and is carried out to awarding body standards. Learners have a particularly good understanding of the assessment process.

16. Barber Bird has recently developed a system for evaluating the views of learners and employers, but the questionnaires used are poorly designed. They comprise mainly closed questions and provide insufficient opportunity for respondents to state their views in detail. The questionnaires are analysed and displayed in graphical form, but the data gathered are of little value in helping the company to improve its provision. Some lessons are evaluated by learners. The evaluations have not yet been used to improve training.

17. The self-assessment report was written by Barber Bird's three managers. Learners and employers were consulted informally, and their views used to contribute to the judgements. Inspectors found similar strengths and weaknesses to some of those identified in the report. However, the report overstated the impact of some strengths, and missed key weaknesses. The company's development plan is appropriate, and progress against it is regularly monitored.

### Good Practice

*A local school sends a group of pupils to Barber Bird for hairdressing training as part of a project to encourage disaffected young people to enter work-based learning. The pupils spend two days each week in training and the other three in school. Barber Bird has supplied the school with copies of its occupationally-relevant key skills assignments, which pupils are completing under the supervision of school staff. This is a good arrangement, as it builds on the pupils' interest in hairdressing, and encourages them to develop their basic skills and work towards a valuable qualification.*

## AREAS OF LEARNING

### Hairdressing & beauty therapy

Grade 3

| Programmes inspected                 | Number of learners | Contributory grade |
|--------------------------------------|--------------------|--------------------|
| Work-based learning for young people | 62                 | 3                  |

18. Barber Bird Limited offers foundation and advanced modern apprenticeships in hairdressing at levels 1, 2 and 3. Learners can also achieve an NVQ unit in barbering. Learners may start their programme at any time during the year. There are 17 foundation modern apprentices and seven advanced modern apprentices. Twelve learners are following NVQ programmes at level 1, 23 at level 2 and one at level 3. Some employers recruit their own learners and send them to Barber Bird, while others are recruited through Connexions and local schools. Learners are given a one-day induction at the start of their learning programme. Some attend the training centre for one day each week or fortnight for training and assessment. Others are trained in their workplace. Advanced modern apprentices who are working towards NVQs at level 3 can choose when to attend the training centre for training and assessment. All learners are employed at local salons. Assessment is carried out in the training centre and in the workplace. Training centre staff conduct a review of learners' progress every 12 weeks, either at work or at the training centre. There are four work-based trainers and assessors, of whom two are internal verifiers.

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

| Work-based learning for young people  |                  |   |         |    |         |   |           |    |     |   |     |   |     |   |     |   |  |
|---------------------------------------|------------------|---|---------|----|---------|---|-----------|----|-----|---|-----|---|-----|---|-----|---|--|
| Advanced modern apprenticeships (AMA) | 2002-03          |   | 2001-02 |    | 2000-01 |   | 1999-2000 |    |     |   |     |   |     |   |     |   |  |
|                                       | No.              | % | No.     | %  | No.     | % | No.       | %  | No. | % | No. | % | No. | % | No. | % |  |
|                                       | Number of starts | 4 |         | 6  |         | 1 |           | 4  |     |   |     |   |     |   |     |   |  |
| Retained*                             | 0                |   | 0       | 0  | 0       | 0 | 1         | 25 |     |   |     |   |     |   |     |   |  |
| Successfully completed                | 0                |   | 0       | 0  | 0       | 0 | 1         | 25 |     |   |     |   |     |   |     |   |  |
| Still in learning                     | 4                |   | 3       | 50 | 0       | 0 | 0         | 0  |     |   |     |   |     |   |     |   |  |

\*retained learners are those who have stayed in learning for at least the planned duration of their training programmes, or have successfully completed their programme within the time allowed

| Work-based learning for young people    |         |   |         |   |         |   |           |   |     |   |     |   |     |   |     |   |
|---|---------|---|---------|---|---------|---|-----------|---|-----|---|-----|---|-----|---|-----|---|
| Foundation modern apprenticeships (FMA) |         |   |         |   |         |   |           |   |     |   |     |   |     |   |     |   |
|   | 2002-03 |   | 2001-02 |   | 2000-01 |   | 1999-2000 |   |     |   |     |   |     |   |     |   |
|   | No.     | % | No.     | % | No.     | % | No.       | % | No. | % | No. | % | No. | % | No. | % |
| Number of starts                        | 18      |   | 2       |   |         |   | 2         |   |     |   |     |   |     |   |     |   |
| Retained*                               | 0       |   | 0       | 0 |         |   | 0         | 0 |     |   |     |   |     |   |     |   |
| Successfully completed                  | 0       |   | 0       | 0 |         |   | 0         | 0 |     |   |     |   |     |   |     |   |
| Still in learning                       | 17      |   | 0       | 0 |         |   | 0         | 0 |     |   |     |   |     |   |     |   |

\*retained learners are those who have stayed in learning for at least the planned duration of their training programmes, or have successfully completed their programme within the time allowed

| Work-based learning for young people |         |   |         |    |         |    |           |    |     |   |     |   |     |   |     |   |
|--------------------------------------|---------|---|---------|----|---------|----|-----------|----|-----|---|-----|---|-----|---|-----|---|
| NVQ Training                         |         |   |         |    |         |    |           |    |     |   |     |   |     |   |     |   |
|                                      | 2002-03 |   | 2001-02 |    | 2000-01 |    | 1999-2000 |    |     |   |     |   |     |   |     |   |
|                                      | No.     | % | No.     | %  | No.     | %  | No.       | %  | No. | % | No. | % | No. | % | No. | % |
| Number of starts                     | 41      |   | 21      |    | 21      |    | 3         |    |     |   |     |   |     |   |     |   |
| Retained*                            | 3       |   | 6       | 29 | 9       | 43 | 2         | 67 |     |   |     |   |     |   |     |   |
| Successfully completed               | 3       |   | 6       | 29 | 5       | 24 | 2         | 67 |     |   |     |   |     |   |     |   |
| Still in learning                    | 24      |   | 8       | 38 | 4       | 19 | 0         | 0  |     |   |     |   |     |   |     |   |

\*retained learners are those who have stayed in learning for at least the planned duration of their training programmes, or have successfully completed their programme within the time allowed

## STRENGTHS

- good individual support for learners
- learners' high level of responsibility for their own progress
- good quality learners' portfolios of evidence

## WEAKNESSES

- slow progress towards achievement of NVQs
- some poor health and safety practice

## OTHER IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED

- more effective use of well-prepared induction booklet

19. Hairdressing training at Barber Bird is satisfactory. Some salons provide additional training through model evenings and special events. The standard of practical

hairdressing is high. In a learning session observed by inspectors, the quality of work on long hair was exceptionally good for learners at this stage of their training. Barber Bird holds competitions at the training centre, including one for school students at the end of their four-week taster programme.

20. Assessors and employers offer good individual support to learners. There is a thorough initial assessment which includes tests for additional basic skills needs. Learners are interviewed and offered taster sessions. Their dexterity is tested. Assessors visit learners in their workplace to carry out assessments. Additional visits take place at the learners' request, and can be arranged at short notice to take advantage of assessment opportunities. Assessments take place both on and off the job. All the salons are well-equipped, and they range from small to medium in size. Products used in the salons and available for sale are good quality professional brands. Staff in the training centre and in the work placements are well qualified and have a good understanding of the NVQ requirements. Staff understand the problems that may affect learners' progress. They are sensitive to learners' needs, and effectively encourage learners' personal development and raise their self-esteem. Learners feel comfortable about approaching staff with concerns, and are confident that any problems will be dealt with. Barber Bird has attracted a large number of learners who have not achieved at school. Many learners have no GCSEs at grade C or above. Approximately 50 per cent have additional learning and/or social needs. A significant number of these learners gain basic skills during their training. Support from Barber Bird's staff improves learners' confidence, enabling some learners to progress from NVQ programmes to modern apprenticeships.

21. Learners take a high level of responsibility for their own progress. They have a clear understanding of the assessment process. They are able to describe in detail the performance criteria for satisfactory completion of elements and units, and are encouraged to identify assessment opportunities. Some learners identified the need to carry out some kinds of work in other salons. For instance, a learner working in a barber's shop attended a ladies' salon to be assessed in the colouring unit. Learners were able to state clearly what stage they had reached in their training, and what they needed to do in order to complete the qualification. Learners know which methods of assessment are required by the awarding body. Barber Bird's self-assessment report identified a weakness in learners' involvement in the assessment process, but this has clearly been remedied.

22. Learners produce good quality portfolios of evidence. They are well structured and include a wide range of evidence which clearly demonstrate their understanding. Learners use photographic evidence to illustrate practical hairdressing skills and enhance assignments. NVQ work is of a high standard and meets the requirements of the awarding body. Learners take responsibility for their portfolios, and gather additional evidence in the workplace to complement their on- and off-the-job training. Learners understand clearly how to use their portfolio and identify the knowledge requirements for their qualification. There are good quality teaching and learning materials which are easily accessed by the learners. Audio and video tapes and handouts are available to

supplement basic skills training. Learners identify the essential knowledge requirements in their portfolios, and use a range of resources such as their text books, the Internet, their colleagues and their peer group, to investigate and fulfil the criteria. Good peer support is developed through portfolio-building sessions in the training centre. Learners who are following a modern apprenticeship programme have examples of vocationally related work in their portfolios which is closely and carefully matched to key skills criteria.

23. Many learners make slow progress, some of them taking over two years to complete their level 2 NVQ. Twenty-four per cent of the learners who started NVQ programmes in 2000-01 have achieved their qualification, but 19 per cent are still in learning. No short-term targets are set for the achievement of NVQ units or elements. The targets are set for the date the learners are expected to complete their training. Some learners complete NVQ units before the target dates. Learners are assessed regularly, but the planning and review of assessments is sometimes poor. Assessors sometimes use learners' progress reviews to set targets for assessments, but they seldom follow them through. The details of learners' progress reviews are not passed to their employers.

24. There is some poor planning of learning sessions in the training centre. Learners are not always given clear learning objectives. There is little evidence of structured training plans, and few records are kept of activities taking place in the learning sessions.

25. There are some poor health and safety practices at the training centre. Only one of the two liquid sterilising jars available was in use despite the high numbers of learners. Learners did not all use the sterilising equipment to clean their combs after dropping them. Some learners were using brushes which were not cleaned between clients. Combustible products were stored close to a gas water heater. No register was taken at the start of sessions, contravening safety and evacuation procedures. In one workplace, a learner reached a portfolio from the top of a cabinet by standing on a high-backed bar stool.

26. There is a well-prepared induction booklet that contains Barber Bird's policies, rules and regulations, and assessment documents. Employers and learners agree a plan for training with a member of Barber Bird's staff. The plan should be recorded in the booklet and updated during progress reviews and at unit completion. However, this does not always happen. Other documents in the booklet are not used fully to enhance the learners' experience and awareness of all aspects of their work.

### **Good Practice**

*One-day events are arranged for learners to enhance their programme. These activities are beyond the requirements of the qualification. The activities provide tasters in different areas and encourage career development. Examples of these are Indian head massage, reiki and reflexology. Learners attend manufacturers' courses to enhance their product knowledge and extend employment opportunities.*