

INSPECTION REPORT

Boston & South Holland Information Technology Centre Reinspection

29 April 2003



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. 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 **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.

SUMMARY

The provider

There have been no major changes in the status of Boston & South Holland Information Technology Centre (ITeC) since the original inspection in September 2001. The provider has discontinued the training in construction and hospitality which it offered at the time of the original inspection. The number of staff involved in work-based learning has remained stable. In hairdressing and beauty therapy, a part-time programme co-ordinator has been recruited.

Overall judgement

The ALI inspection in September 2001 found that training in hairdressing and beauty therapy was unsatisfactory. At the end of the reinspection process, all aspects of the provision were found to be satisfactory.

Grades awarded

	Original	Reinspection
Hairdressing & beauty therapy	4	3
Contributory grades:		
Work-based learning for young people	4	3

THE REINSPECTION

1. A team of two inspectors spent a total of six days with the Boston & South Holland ITeC between February and April of 2003. They interviewed 26 learners, carried out nine interviews with provider staff, visited four work placements and interviewed four workplace supervisors. Inspectors visited two training centres and the premises of two subcontractors involved in training and assessment. They observed and graded two learning sessions. They examined 13 portfolios, nine individual learning plans and records of initial assessment. They also examined policy and procedure documents, the organisation's strategic development plans, external verifier reports and the self-assessment report for 2002.

Grades awarded to learning sessions at the original inspection

	Grade 1	Grade 2	Grade 3	Grade 4	Grade 5	Grade 6	Grade 7	Total
Construction	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	1
Business administration, management & professional	0	0	4	1	0	0	0	5
Hairdressing & beauty therapy	0	0	2	1	0	0	0	3
Total	0	0	7	2	0	0	0	9

Grades awarded to learning sessions at reinspection

	Grade 1	Grade 2	Grade 3	Grade 4	Grade 5	Grade 6	Grade 7	Total
Hairdressing & beauty therapy	0	1	1	0	0	0	0	2
Total	0	1	1	0	0	0	0	2

AREAS OF LEARNING

Hairdressing & beauty therapy

Grade 3

Programmes inspected	Number of learners	Contributory grade
Work-based learning for young people	24	3

2. Learners demonstrate good practical ability during the off-the-job training, and a number of learners display a higher level of ability than would normally be expected of them. Many learners are able to carry out complex treatments involving multi-colour highlights and lowlights. This was identified in the self-assessment report. Learners are placed at local salons which are well resourced with modern, commercial equipment and a good range of products. Efforts have been made in both training centres to offer the learners realistic working environments. In one centre learners are allocated a number of appointments and are required to work on clients who request a variety of treatments. Learners have good support and guidance from their employers and enjoy many opportunities to develop their practical skills in the workplace. They have good access to a range of models and treatments. A small number has also received product training through visits by manufacturers. Many salons have a staff training session once a week and learners are invited to attend. Most of the employers have adopted programmes of training which complement those offered by the off-the-job training centres. Hairdressing tutors in the commercial salon are working towards key skills qualifications. One training centre has developed an effective training programme which introduces learners to skills that are required in their salons at an early stage. The other training centre has developed an annual schedule of background knowledge sessions and practical training which employers can use as a focus for their in-salon training sessions.

STRENGTHS

- good practical skills demonstrated by learners
- good communication with work placements
- good range of evidence in portfolios

WEAKNESSES

- poor retention and achievement rates

OTHER IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED

- more use of work-based assessments
- better recording of minutes of meetings

3. Communication between the provider, participating salons and training centres has improved significantly since the original inspection. The provider has introduced a new training agreement for subcontractors, which outlines their responsibilities. Written progress reports are now completed regularly by the training centres and passed to the provider. The content of the reports is used in the progress reviews. A part-time hairdressing co-ordinator has been appointed, although she has only been in post for six months. Progress reviews take place every 12 weeks, and the learners' progress is discussed and targets for development are agreed. There has been a recent improvement in the targets being agreed during the reviews. The hairdressing co-ordinator also visits the salons to offer support to the employers and learners. As a result of the improved progress reviews, two more learners were identified as having additional learning needs. Regular meetings are now held with both subcontractors to discuss the learners' progress, and minutes are taken to record any decisions made. A new form of initial assessment has now been introduced to identify learners who have additional learning needs and the learning support arrangements have been extended to provide support for the hairdressing learners. The new initial assessment tests have been applied to new learners, but not to learners who have already started their training.

4. The original inspection highlighted insufficient diversity of work-based evidence in portfolios as a weakness. Portfolios now contain evidence of work-based assessments for several national vocational qualification (NVQ) units. Photographic evidence is more commonly used and learners have recently started to complete logbooks of the work they have carried out during the week. The logbooks are checked and countersigned by the employers and off-the-job assessors use the evidence to support decisions relating to completion of the range of treatments required. Assessments which are recorded in portfolios now take more account of work-based evidence.

5. Poor retention and achievement rates were identified at the original inspection and they remain poor. Too many learners leave without qualifications and without completing their training. Of the 12 foundation modern apprentices who started since August 2002, 25 per cent have already left. Fifty-four per cent of the foundation modern apprentices left without any qualification in 2001-02, 15 per cent have completed the framework and 30 per cent are still in learning.

6. None of the learners who started NVQ programmes in 2002-03 achieved the qualification or remain in learning. Thirty-two per cent of the learners who started NVQ programmes in 2001-02 left without any qualification, 11 per cent have achieved the NVQ so far, and 58 per cent remain in learning.

7. The current company business plan now identifies targets for retention and achievement and there is closer monitoring of progress. A system has been introduced to monitor the learners' progress towards completion of NVQ units and individual assessments. Inspection of portfolios shows that many learners are on target to complete their assessments within the planned duration of their programme and several may complete early.
8. Despite the increase of work-based evidence to support assessment decisions, the assessments are often limited to reception duties and working with others. Witness statements from employers are limited to the comments made in learners' logbooks.
9. Minutes are being recorded of the meetings which are now being held between the provider and the two subcontractors. However, they are very brief and do not contain sufficient detail of discussions and decisions that are taken.

Good Practice

A good ratio of trainers to learners at the Spalding training centre ensures that learners receive close attention and support during practical sessions.

The use of logbooks encourages learners to assess their own progress and to encourage employers to participate in training.