

REINSPECTION REPORT

GDN Childcare Training Ltd Reinspection

28 January 2004



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

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

Inspections are carried out in accordance with the *Common Inspection Framework* by teams of full-time inspectors and part-time associate inspectors who have knowledge of, and experience in, the work which they inspect. All providers are invited to nominate a senior member of their staff to participate in the inspection as a team member.

REINSPECTION REPORT

GDN Childcare Training Ltd Reinspection

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REINSPECTION REPORT

DESCRIPTION OF THE PROVIDER

1. GDN Childcare Training Ltd (GDN) was formed in 1985 and is a private training provider based in Salford. It offers work-based learning for foundation and advanced modern apprentices and national vocational qualifications (NVQs) in early years care and education. It operates through the Greater Manchester area. The company's move to nearby larger premises is imminent.
2. Since the previous inspection, the company has employed a new training centre manager who oversees training with the director, and they are responsible for quality assurance.

SCOPE OF PROVISION

Health, social care & public services

3. There are 69 learners in early years care and education, of whom 28 are advanced modern apprentices and 41 are foundation modern apprentices. Nineteen learners are working towards the NVQ at level 4 in early years management. In 2001-02, 34 learners started this programme, many of whom transferred from an academic programme when the NVQ at level 4 became available nationally. All learners who started the programme in 2002 and 2003, remain in learning. At the time of the inspection GDN was recruiting several more learners to this programme.
4. GDN recruits learners mainly from the nurseries, and following personal enquiries. Learners receive an induction at GDN and at the nursery where they work. Assessment and on- and off-the-job training take place in the nurseries and at GDN's training centre. Learners now complete a technical certificate as part of their programme. Learners can join the programme at any time during the year. There are opportunities for learners to progress from the NVQ at level 2 to levels 3 and 4.

ABOUT THE REINSPECTION

Number of inspectors	3
Number of inspection days	6
Number of learner interviews	25
Number of staff interviews	6
Number of employer interviews	6
Number of locations/sites/learning centres visited	1
Number of visits	8

OVERALL JUDGEMENT

5. At the previous inspection, the work-based learning was unsatisfactory, as were leadership and management, equality of opportunity and quality assurance. At the end of the reinspection process, all aspects of the provision were found to be satisfactory.

GRADES

Grades awarded at previous inspection

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

Leadership and management	4
Contributory grades:	
Equality of opportunity	4
Quality assurance	4
Health, social care & public services	4
Contributory grades:	
Work-based learning for young people	4

Grades awarded at reinspection

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

Leadership and management	3
Contributory grades:	
Equality of opportunity	3
Quality assurance	3
Health, social care & public services	3
Contributory grades:	
Work-based learning for young people	3

KEY FINDINGS

Achievement and standards

6. **Retention rates have improved over the past two years across all programmes.** The learners on the NVQ at level 4 programme have not yet reached their expected end date. Over two-thirds of those who started in 2002-03 have achieved their full qualification or are on target to complete their training within the time planned. However, of those learners who started in 2001-02, many are making slow progress.

7. **Since the previous inspection, fewer learners are leaving the programme early.**

Most learners who started in 2003-04, remain in learning. **The company has an effective strategy for improving retention rates.**

Quality of education and training

8. **Teaching and learning are well planned.** Since the previous inspection GDN has developed a detailed learning plan and a scheme of work for off-the-job training. Training includes clear references to key skills. Tutors use common, detailed session plans. On-the-job training develops learners' practical skills through standardised training packages.

9. **Since the previous inspection, GDN has improved their assessment procedures.** Some learners receive regular assessment visits, but others are less frequent and this has a detrimental effect on their progress. Learners are clear about the process of assessment and are given clear feedback from tutors.

10. All learners have an appropriate initial assessment and a job skills analysis before starting their training programme. Tutors discuss the outcomes with learners to identify the most appropriate level of training and individual support needs.

11. **Learners' induction includes good information about their training and their rights and responsibilities.** GDN monitors the effectiveness of induction through feedback from learners and observation by managers.

12. **Tutors support learners well and offer constructive advice about how to improve their performance.** Employers help learners to enhance their current skills and develop new ones.

Leadership and management

13. GDN has made significant progress since the previous inspection in February 2002. **Training is now well managed.** The company has produced a well-defined learning plan that covers all the key aspects of training. Relationships with employers are positive and they work well together to support learners.

14. The company's development plan clearly states the targets for retention and achievement. It clearly identifies risk factors that could prevent training from improving.

15. **Staff appraisals are effective.** They are well planned and take into account performance and staff development targets. Information from a variety of sources, including employers, is used to support this process.

16. **Management support staff in their training activities.** All staff keep a personal continuous professional development portfolio of achievements.

17. GDN has improved its management information system and this is now satisfactory.

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Retention and achievement data are analysed and reported regularly. Information is now accurate and readily available to staff.

18. The company has improved its equality of opportunity policies and procedures, and they are now satisfactory. The company has a wide range of strategies to increase the proportion of learners from minority ethnic groups. Their involvement in widening participation strategies across the wider community supports this initiative. The company collects a wide range of information to promote equal opportunities.

19. Since the previous inspection, GDN has made improvements to the quality assurance arrangements and these are now satisfactory. Monitoring of health and safety is now satisfactory. All employers are monitored each year against a standard criteria and staff are updated on health and safety requirements. Observations of training take place regularly. However, **there are insufficient checks on learners' progress. Some aspects of quality assurance are incomplete and do not ensure that staff follow routine procedures consistently and correctly.**

20. Internal verification has improved since the previous inspection and it is now satisfactory. Feedback to assessors and verifiers is detailed and constructive. However, some of the feedback does not identify inappropriate assessments.

21. Monitoring of the post-inspection action plan is satisfactory. Monitoring is thorough and a regular summary of improvements is produced for management and staff. Many of the improvements that the company has identified have only recently been introduced.

During the reinspection process, the inspectors identified the following strengths and weaknesses:

Leadership and management

Strengths

- good management of training
- effective performance reviews for staff
- wide range of strategies for targeting under-represented groups

Weaknesses

- insufficient checks on learners' progress
- incomplete quality assurance procedures

Health, social care & public services

Strengths

- effective planning for off-the-job training
- good support and updating for staff

Weaknesses

- slow progress by modern apprentices

DETAILED REINSPECTION FINDINGS

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

Grade 3

During the reinspection process, the inspectors identified the following strengths and weaknesses:

Strengths

- good management of training
- effective performance reviews for staff
- wide range of strategies for targeting under-represented groups

Weaknesses

- insufficient checks on learners' progress
- incomplete quality assurance procedures

22. GDN has made significant progress since the previous inspection in February 2002. Its three-year development plan identifies important issues and updates progress against its three strategies for participation, skills development and learning. It contains a clear mission statement with specific aims that describe how it will be achieved. The plan clearly states the targets and the measures of performance that will be used to monitor the retention and achievement rates. The company clearly identifies risk factors that could prevent training from improving.

23. Training is now well managed. The recent appointment of a training centre manager has had significant impact of the monitoring of quality assurance practices. Staff have completed a three-day workshop in the use of the documents. GDN now sets clear targets for assessors to achieve against their job descriptions and which relate to the company's retention and achievement targets. GDN keeps a monthly record of recruitment against targets. Progress against the post-inspection plan is thorough and is updated regularly.

24. Training plans link clearly to GDN's business plan. Learners receive an annual schedule for off-the-job training at the beginning of their programme. Attendance at some training sessions is mandatory, while for others it is more flexible and learners can choose to attend at times that meet their work demands.

25. Since the previous inspection the company has introduced a clear structured plan for induction, initial assessment, key skills training, and health and safety. Staff are clear about their roles and responsibilities. They receive useful information from senior managers.

26. Staff performance reviews are effective. Staff have an annual appraisal and regular

six-weekly reviews. Since the previous inspection, job descriptions have been rewritten to take account of business targets. They are clear and are used as a basis for monitoring staff performance. Employer and learners' views of assessors' performance are collected and are used in the reviews, together with results from observations of training. Actions plans from these reviews are closely monitored.

27. Each member of staff, including management, has personal responsibility for maintaining a portfolio of professional work and records of achievement, as part of a continuing staff development programme. This is used effectively to identify further training and development needs and aspects of outstanding achievement in their work.

28. Since the previous inspection, GDN has further revised its management information system and it is now satisfactory. The system identifies early leavers and produces a list of those learners at risk of leaving early. Reports on retention and achievement rates are now accurate and are measured against company targets. The information is incorporated into monthly trainer and assessor meetings to keep staff up to date on their own performance and that of the company.

29. Learners at GDN have access to satisfactory resources. GDN also ensures that employers' resources are appropriate. Learners have access to a range of learning materials and equipment at the training centre. GDN pays the travel costs for learners to attend the training centre. It has experienced some significant staff changes since the previous inspection and staffing levels are now satisfactory. There are a number of laptop computers available to staff and learners. GDN's move to larger and more appropriate premises is imminent.

30. Support for learners' literacy and numeracy needs is satisfactory. Two staff have achieved a relevant qualification. All learners have an in-depth screening for literacy and numeracy and tutors discuss the support needs individually. Tutors take account of learners' needs in their off-the-job training and employers are also advised of their needs. However, some employers do not know how to support these needs, nor do they know how to link them to the standard off-the-job training packages.

Equality of opportunity

Contributory grade 3

31. GDN's arrangements to ensure equality of opportunity for learners have improved since the previous inspection and are now satisfactory. The equal opportunities policy has been revised and incorporates all current legislation. Staff have received training in equal opportunities and diversity. Learners now receive good information at induction and they have a good understanding of equal opportunities issues. Equality of opportunity is now targeted through progress reviews, links with employers, GDN's own work-based development programme and staff training. Evaluations of training sent to employers and learners now contain clear references to equality of opportunity. The results of a recent employer review are currently being analysed.

32. The company has a wide range of strategies for targeting under-represented groups. It attends careers events regularly and participates in the 14-16 schools initiative.

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Currently 80 young people from local schools attend taster courses which links schools and employers. The company is also involved in a widening participation strategy to deliver short courses to help improve career choices for young people.

33. GDN is represented on a broad range of groups across the region and uses information from these sources to promote training to minority ethnic groups. GDN recognises that the number of learners from minority ethnic groups is low. However, they continue to contact employers from these groups regularly and inform them of training opportunities.

34. GDN collects and analyses data on gender, ethnicity and disabilities. A system has been developed since the previous inspection to monitor differences in the rate of learners' progress between groups, and appropriate learning support is available if required. Monitoring of equality of opportunities now takes place on a monthly basis, differences in performance are identified and action plans are written which have clear targets.

Quality assurance

Contributory grade 3

35. GDN has improved its quality assurance arrangements significantly since the previous inspection and they are now satisfactory. Quality assurance policies and procedures are reviewed each year. The company has produced a detailed learning plan for on-and off-the-job training and all schemes of work follow a standard plan. Learning sessions are structured and well planned. All staff are observed carrying out training and during internal verification. Meetings are well recorded and actions are completed. Different aspects of the training programmes are reviewed and identified actions are monitored, but there is no overall review. Employers agree to allow the learners to develop their portfolios for two hours a week, and this is closely monitored. Employers have clear guidelines to help them support learners in the development of background knowledge.

36. Since the previous inspection, GDN has significantly improved the monitoring of the health and safety arrangements and it is now satisfactory. A health and safety contracts manager now has responsibility for this area of work, supported by another member of staff and administration support. GDN ensures that all employers sign a health and safety agreement. Health and safety also forms a part of the learners' progress reviews. An annual schedule shows the dates when staff will accompany the health and safety contracts manager for a day to support their training and improve the quality of the progress review process.

37. Internal verification has significantly improved since the previous inspection and is now satisfactory. An internal verification handbook gives clear guidance to staff about the required procedures. The director and the training centre manager provide detailed and constructive verbal and written feedback to staff on their performance. Feedback is clearly aimed at raising the standards of assessment. The training centre manager produces an annual internal verification report which forms the basis of a quality assurance action plan. Staff also complete peer verification reviews when appropriate,

but some reviews have not been signed by the verifiers.

38. Observation of teaching and training takes place regularly as part of the internal verification process. Feedback is clear and a full report is produced against specific criteria. The outcomes are discussed with staff and actions are identified for further development.

39. Feedback from learners and employers is satisfactory. Views of learners and employers are collected regularly and are analysed. The results are reported to the staff, employers and learners and actions to deal with problems are taken promptly. For example, as a result of feedback from learners, further key skills classes were introduced.

40. There are insufficient checks on learners' progress. Learners keep a progress record in the front of their portfolios, but some learners do not understand its significance. Assessors keep ongoing records of learners' achievements, but some learners are not clear about the progress they have made or what they have to do to complete their training. This was also a weakness at the previous inspection. Although GDN carefully monitors the staff's performance, the learners' progress is not consistently checked.

41. The monitoring of quality assurance procedures is incomplete. GDN has a quality assurance policy and procedures, but some routine tasks are not being completed thoroughly by staff. Inconsistencies in trainers' and assessors' working practices are having a negative effect on learners' progress. For example, assessors' visits vary between assessors and one learner has only had one assessment in the past seven months. GDN has introduced a range of new procedures since the previous inspection, but they do not form a complete quality assurance system. Some procedures are helpful to staff, but the number has increased which makes it difficult for staff to identify those essential to their work. GDN is aware of this issue. There are clear procedures for progress reviews, but many of these are incomplete and there is little guidance for learners to help them improve their work. GDN does not fully evaluate new procedures or how they contribute to raising standards of training and assessment.

42. The post-inspection action plan involves all staff and contains a detailed list of actions to help raise standards. The company is currently working on a new self-assessment report. There are appropriate procedures to review the progress made against the actions in the action plan. The director completes a summary update for all staff.

AREAS OF LEARNING

Health, social care & public services

Grade 3

Programmes inspected	Number of learners	Contributory grade
Work-based learning for young people	88	3

During the reinspection process, the inspectors identified the following strengths and weaknesses:

Strengths

- effective planning for off-the-job training
- good support and updating for staff

Weaknesses

- slow progress by modern apprentices

Achievement and standards

43. Unit achievement has improved over the past two years. Over two-thirds of the learners who started in 2002-03 are on target to achieve their full qualification within the time planned. Retention rates have improved significantly over the past two years, and GDN has appointed a retention officer to monitor learners' progress.

44. Learners make slow progress on the modern apprenticeship programmes. Of those who started an advanced modern apprenticeship in 2001-02, 29 per cent are still in learning. Twenty-five per cent of the foundation modern apprentices are still in learning. Many of the learners who are working towards the key skills are still in training, but progress is slow. Of those who have achieved the modern apprenticeship, some have gone beyond their expected end date. Key skills training is now an integral part of the NVQ training and evidence is produced through activities at work and is supported by training sessions at GDN's training centre.

45. For the advanced modern apprentices and NVQ at level 4 learners who started in 2002-03, it is not possible to make a judgement on achievement, as many have not yet reached their planned completion date. The learners who started the foundation modern apprenticeship in the same year were part of a specific New Deal project for unemployed young people. GDN identified alternative and more appropriate training for many of these learners in the early stages of the programme. Of those who have completed the training, only 2 per cent have gained the full qualification. However, there is the potential for 61 per cent achievement if all those still in learning complete their training programme.

46. The standard of learners' work in portfolios is satisfactory. Some learners produce

good written work and show a clear understanding of the main aspects of childcare and education. However, other learners' work does not sufficiently emphasise the 10 underlying principles of childcare and education.

47. The targets on some of the progress reviews are insufficiently detailed. They do not clearly identify what the learner has to do to progress to the next stage of training. GDN has recognised this problem and assessors have completed an individual action plan for the learners who are making slow progress. Copies are sent to the appropriate nurseries and improvement in performance will be closely monitored.

Quality of education and training

48. Training for the development of background knowledge has improved since the previous inspection, and it is now well planned. There is a detailed learning plan that clearly links off-the-job training sessions to the knowledge requirements of the NVQ. However, some schemes of work do not identify links to the workplace.

49. Training plans are well organised. Tutors use a range of appropriate methods for teaching and assessment. Learning goals are clearly identified with learners. The different learning needs and abilities of individuals are taken into account and learners are well supported. Good handouts help learners complete tasks in the allocated time. Learners demonstrate a good level of understanding through well-planned discussions and in their written work. Tutors regularly check that learners understand complex concepts. GDN knows how many learners need additional help and provide appropriate support.

50. Assessment practice is now satisfactory. Assessment plans for observation in the workplace are appropriate. Some tutors make regular six-weekly assessment visits, but others observe over a longer period. When this takes place, assessments include a number of units but this has a detrimental effect on some learners' progress. In some instances there is an over-reliance on written evidence such as questions, task sheets and diaries. Learners are clear about the evidence they have to produce and how it relates to their assessment. Assessors give detailed oral and written feedback to learners after each assessment.

51. There are two good initiatives to develop links between background knowledge and workplace practice. One gives employers a set of nine targets which include rights and responsibilities, the learner's role and occupation and career pathways. The other informs employers of the importance of linking background knowledge to practice and provides a system to record learners' development and ability across a wide range of activities. There are indications that this is working well, but neither system has reached completion and it is too soon to judge their effectiveness.

52. Since the previous inspection, GDN has separated initial assessment from the induction programme and they are both now satisfactory. All learners carry out an initial assessment and a job skills analysis. Learners are then given oral and written feedback by

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tutors who help to identify the most appropriate level of training and individual support needs for learners. The outcomes of initial assessment are used to plan sessions. Learners are often grouped according to their learning styles.

53. GDN has made several improvements to the induction. Learners are given good information about their rights and responsibilities. GDN monitors the effectiveness of the induction through feedback from learners and observation by managers. The induction packs include too much printed text and some of the language is difficult for learners to understand.

54. Tutors support learners well. Learners have contact numbers for staff at GDN and there is a regular evening drop-in facility for them to access a range of learning support materials and facilities. Employers support learners with personal matters as well as with training issues. GDN ensures that learners are paid their transport costs to the training centre and for their return journey when they attend off-the-job training.

55. Resources for on- and off-the-job training are satisfactory. All of the workplaces offer a wide range of learning experiences. Accommodation is small, but well planned, and GDN is moving premises in the near future.

Leadership and management

56. Overall, the leadership and management of training is satisfactory. Training is now well planned, and there are better links between on- and off-the-job training. Quality assurance arrangements have improved and staff are given detailed procedures. However, assessors do not make sufficient checks on learners' progress. A retention and achievement officer has recently been appointed to monitor the new initiatives which should improve the learners' performance. Support and updating for staff is good and some is innovative; for example, a six-day visit to a health farm to capture issues from the previous inspection and to develop a post-inspection action plan. Staff attend a wide range of courses and conferences on topical issues and share new information with colleagues. All staff have been trained in equality of opportunity and diversity. New staff are given comprehensive information about GDN and its role. They shadow experienced trainers and assessors before starting their training duties.