

INSPECTION REPORT

Longden Ltd

06 July 2006



ADULT LEARNING
INSPECTORATE

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 aged 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
- adult information, advice and guidance services (**nextstep**).

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.

Pre-inspection analysis

The resources allocated to a cycle 2 inspection are primarily determined by the findings from the previous inspection. Account is also taken of information about achievement and retention obtained from the funding body, and any significant changes in the size or scope of the provision.

Where a provider has received good grades in cycle 1, the cycle 2 inspection is relatively light. If the provider offers a number of areas of learning, a restricted sample is inspected.

Where a provider has received satisfactory grades in cycle 1, the cycle 2 inspection is less intensive and it is possible that not all areas of learning are included.

Where there are significant unsatisfactory grades from cycle 1, the intensity of the cycle 2 inspection is broadly the same as cycle 1, and all significant areas of learning are inspected.

Providers that have not previously been inspected will receive a full inspection.

Overall effectiveness

The grades given for areas of learning and leadership and management will be used to arrive at a judgement about the overall effectiveness of the provider.

An **outstanding** provider should typically have leadership and management and at least half of the areas of learning judged to be a grade 1. All area of learning grades will be graded 1 or 2.

A **good** provider should have leadership and management and at least half of the area of learning grades judged to be a grade 2 or better. A good training provider should not have any grade 4s, and few grade 3s in the areas of learning.

A **satisfactory** provider should have adequate or better grades in leadership and management and in at least two thirds of the area of learning grades. An adequate provider might have a range of grades across areas of learning, some of which might be graded 4.

Provision will normally be deemed to be **inadequate** where more than one third of the area of learning grades and/or leadership and management are judged to be inadequate.

The final decision as to whether the provision is inadequate rests with the Chief Inspector of Adult Learning.

Grading

Inspectors use a four-point scale to summarise their judgements about the quality of provision in occupational/curriculum areas and Jobcentre Plus programmes, as well as to summarise their judgements about the quality of learning sessions. The same scale is used to describe the quality of leadership and management, which includes equality of opportunity and quality assurance. The descriptors for the four grades are:

- *grade 1 - outstanding*
- *grade 2 - good*
- *grade 3 - satisfactory*
- *grade 4 - inadequate*

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INSPECTION REPORT

DESCRIPTION OF THE PROVIDER

1. Longden Limited (Longden) is a private training organisation. It was established in 1992 and is based at two sites, in Coventry and Bickenhill. Although a small proportion of the work of Longden is government funded, most of it consists of the design and delivery of specific learning programmes for organisations. In 2004-05, Longden had a small contract for Train to Gain programmes, for a level 2 award in support work in schools, and a team leader programme. To date in 2005-06, 310 learners have worked towards a level 2 award in support work in schools. Of these, 146 were funded through Train to Gain and 164 were funded through other Learning and Skills Council (LSC) project funding. In addition, 37 learners have worked towards a level 2 team leader programme and 42 learners towards a level 2 customer service programme. At the time of the inspection, there were seven learners on a programme leading to the level 2 award in support work in schools and nine learners on a level 2 award in support work in schools funded by the LSC. A further 10 learners on a customer service programme, and 17 learners on Train to Gain programmes were not within the scope of this inspection. Recruitment to the programme is managed through a brokerage system, which in Birmingham is controlled by Business Link, and is currently being reviewed regionally.

2. Longden contracts with the Birmingham, Coventry, and Black Country LSCs, of which Birmingham is the lead LSC. The company is managed by the managing director and owner. A team of nine assessors work part-time for the organisation. Two further staff work for Longden employed through an agency.

OVERALL EFFECTIVENESS

Grade 3

3. **The overall effectiveness of the provision is satisfactory.** Longden's leadership and management are satisfactory as are its arrangements for equality of opportunity and quality improvement. The quality of the provision is good.

4. **The inspection team had some confidence in the reliability of the self-assessment process.** The self-assessment report produced for this inspection is the first produced by Longden. The managing director and staff were all involved in the self-assessment process. The report covers the requirements of the Common Inspection Framework. There are no identified strengths or weaknesses identified in the report. The report grades key questions, not leadership and management and the area of learning. The report is sufficiently critical in parts. There is no development plan, although specific actions have been identified within the report. Inspectors identified additional weaknesses.

5. **The provider has demonstrated that it has sufficient capacity to make improvements.** Longden has identified most of the improvements required to ensure that the quality of the provision improves.

KEY CHALLENGES FOR LONGDEN LTD:

- maintain the very good achievement rates
- devise and implement a strategy for literacy, numeracy and language support
- implement formal equality of opportunity arrangements
- devise a formal quality assurance system
- provide trainers/assessors with vocational training

GRADES

grade 1 = outstanding, grade 2 = good, grade 3 = satisfactory, grade 4 = inadequate

Grades awarded at inspection

Leadership and management		3
Contributory grades:		
Equality of opportunity		3
Quality improvement		3

Education and training			2
Contributory areas:	Number of learners	Contributory grade	
<i>Direct learning support</i>		2	
Other government-funded provision	16	2	

ABOUT THE INSPECTION

6. The level 2 award in support work in schools was inspected and graded. Training programmes in business administration and law, specifically team leader and customer service qualifications, were not graded as there were too few learners. However, evidence was examined from these areas and used to support judgements in the key findings section of the report.

Number of inspectors	2
Number of inspection days	8
Number of learners interviewed	28
Number of staff interviewed	18
Number of employers interviewed	7
Number of locations/sites/learning centres visited	5

KEY FINDINGS

Achievements and standards

7. **Achievement rates for support workers in schools are very good.** In 2004-05, all learners achieved the qualification. In 2005-06, 94 per cent of learners achieved the qualification. Currently, 16 learners are still in learning and are progressing well.

8. **Learners achieve a good range of personal skills.** They develop good self-confidence and a better understanding of their role within the school. Learners develop their professional skill, and improve their motivation.

The quality of provision

Grades given to learning sessions

	Grade 1	Grade 2	Grade 3	Grade 4	Total
Education and training	0	0	3	0	3
Total	0	0	3	0	3

9. **Tutor/assessors provide learners with good individual support.** They provide good advice and support outside the formal sessions by e-mail and telephone. Longden does not systematically monitor or record learners' progress. However, staff have some recorded information about the progression of individual learners.

10. All teaching and learning sessions observed were judged to be satisfactory. The teaching programme is well planned. All tutors use a pack of learning materials developed to support the programme. This is very detailed and includes a scheme of work, individual session plans and support materials.

11. Learners' portfolios of evidence contain a satisfactory range of evidence. However, learners complete most of the written evidence in groups rather than on an individual

basis. During the learning sessions, tutors work through the tasks in the learners' portfolio in a very structured way. Some teaching and learning sessions are not sufficiently varied or challenging for individual learners. Tutors do not use a wide variety of teaching methods.

12. All learners complete an initial assessment of their literacy skills. Although tutors compensate well if learners have a literacy or language need, support is not provided to help learners develop these skills. The company has identified the need to provide additional literacy support and has recently offered this in one school.

13. The programme does not provide sufficient learning activities to develop learners' skills. Few of the tutor/assessors have relevant vocational experience. They do not have a sufficient understanding of the context of the primary schools in which the learners work.

Leadership and management

14. **Project management is good.** The project is supported by specifically developed learning materials and has clear timescales, team targets and staff roles and responsibilities. There is good communication within the project team and between the team and employers.

15. Performance data relating to the programme is systematically collected and analysed. Staff are aware of the success rates for the programme.

16. Longden does not have a formal staff appraisal system. However, the managing director does carry out informal individual meetings with staff. Staff carry out relevant and regular development activities. Records of staff development are maintained in staff personal files.

17. Longden has a mission statement, but there is no formal written business plan. Although there is a skills for life plan there is no skills for life strategy. Skills for life is the government's strategy on training in literacy, numeracy and the use of language. The provider is not effectively meeting learners' additional support needs.

18. **The formal arrangements for equality of opportunity are inadequate.** No relevant staff training has been carried out on the legal implications of equal opportunities and related issues.

19. **Internal verification is good.** Longden has a very thorough and robust internal verification system. This system is used well to implement improvements within the provider.

20. **There are no specific, formal written quality assurance procedures.** Some of the provider's policies are out of date and are not fit for purpose.

Leadership and management

Strengths

- good project management
- good internal verification

Weaknesses

- inadequate formal arrangements for equality of opportunity
- insufficient formal arrangements for quality assurance

Education and training

Direct learning support

Strengths

- very good achievement of qualifications
- good achievement of personal skills
- good individual support for learners

Weaknesses

- insufficient support to meet learners' literacy needs
- insufficient learning activities to develop learners' vocational skills

WHAT LEARNERS LIKE ABOUT LONGDEN LTD:

- 'tutors explain things in our language'
- 'the tutors help you to be enthusiastic and confident'
- 'the tutors help us to understand our jobs better and why it's important to do them properly'
- 'the support has helped to make us into a team'

WHAT LEARNERS THINK LONGDEN LTD COULD IMPROVE:

- the space available in portfolios to write the assessments - not enough
- the explanations of some of the terminology - not sufficiently clear
- the visual aids in learning sessions - not enough