



Providing Inspection Services for
Department of Education
Department for Employment and Learning
Department of Culture, Arts and Leisure

FOLLOW-UP INSPECTION

OF

THE WORKERS' EDUCATIONAL ASSOCIATION (WEA)
(NORTHERN IRELAND)

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JANUARY 2004

Mr Stevie Johnston
Director
Workers' Educational Association (Northern Ireland)
1-3 Fitzwilliam Street
BELFAST
BT9 6AW

March 2004

Dear Mr Johnston

FOLLOW-UP TO THE INSPECTION OF THE WORKERS' EDUCATIONAL ASSOCIATION (WEA) (NORTHERN IRELAND)

The original inspection in January 2002 highlighted a number of strengths in the WEA's provision. These included:

- the organisation's capacity, through well-developed community and employment-based networks, to bring those most removed from the educational experience back into learning;
- the good quality of most of the teaching and learning;
- the strong leadership and management of the organisation; and
- the organisation's commitment to improvement, and well-developed capacity to promote innovation and implement change.

The inspection also identified the need for improvement in the following key areas:

- the imbalance in the creative learning programme area, with an over-emphasis on the provision of recreational courses; and
- the range of resources, and number of qualified staff, to support the teaching of basic skills.

In the interval since the inspection, the Essential Skills Strategy for Northern Ireland has been developed, and new requirements for the training of tutors have been implemented by the Department for Employment and Learning (DEL).

In addition, the following changes which affect the work of the organisation have taken place:

- a systematic programme of staff development and training has been implemented for staff who act as tutors on essential skills courses;
- a range of learning materials, linked to the new curricula, has been developed to support the teaching on essential skills courses;
- accredited essential skills courses, which are based on the new essential skills curricula, have been introduced to the organisation; and
- a review of provision in the creative learning programme has been undertaken.

The Education and Training Inspectorate carried out a follow-up inspection in January 2004.

The following are the most important improvements, which have been implemented since the original inspection:

- the increased number of appropriately qualified essential skills tutors;
- a significant improvement in the planning for the teaching of essential skills, and improved procedures for the initial assessment, monitoring, review and accreditation of achievement, of learners on essential skills courses;
- the good range and quality of the teaching resources available to tutors working on essential skills courses; and
- improved links with employers from the creative industries, and the development of a broad range of non-recreational courses in creative learning, which link creativity with enterprise and employment, and provide good opportunities for those wishing to develop new or existing skills or expertise to enhance their employment opportunities.

The WEA has made good progress in addressing the key areas for action. The learners and broader community can have confidence in the organisation's commitment to improvement, and in the effectiveness of its action in response to the findings of the inspection.

Yours sincerely

ELIZABETH WELLS (MRS)
Inspection Services Branch

