

# Independent Training Services Ltd

## Inspection report

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**Unique reference number:** 52459

**Name of lead inspector:** Sheila Willis HMI

**Last day of inspection:** 29 July 2011

**Type of provider:** Independent learning provider

**Address:** Park Road  
Barnsley  
South Yorkshire  
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## Information about the provider

1. Independent Training Services Limited (ITS) is a registered charity founded in 1981. Located in Barnsley, it became a limited company in 1987 called the Barnsley Youth Development Association and in 2002 changed its name to ITS.
2. The Skills Funding Agency contracts with ITS to deliver intermediate and advanced apprenticeships for learners aged 16 to 18, 19 to 24 and over 25 and the Young People's Learning Agency contracts with ITS to deliver learner-responsive apprenticeships and foundation learning provision. Government funding represents 97% of its annual income.
3. ITS provides training for 520 learners in seven subject areas. Information and communication technology, and sport, leisure and recreation were not inspected. ITS holds a subcontract with Yorkshire Training Partnership to deliver apprenticeships to 60 learners, and with Calderdale College to deliver commissioned activity care provision at National Vocational Qualification (NVQ) level 4 to 30 learners. It subcontracts Foundation Learning provision to seven local providers and 139 learners are currently enrolled on programmes.
4. The company is governed by a board of seven trustees and employs 60 staff. The senior management team comprises a chief executive and four managers with responsibility for operations, quality improvement, business development, and finance.
5. Barnsley has a population of approximately 230,000. At 41%, the percentage of school pupils achieving five GCSEs at grades A\* to C, including English and mathematics, is significantly below the regional and the national average for England. The proportion of adults in Barnsley who hold no formal qualifications is substantially higher than the average for England. The worklessness rate is high compared with regional and national averages.
6. ITS provides training on behalf of the following organisations:
  - Calderdale College
  - Yorkshire Training Partnership

7. The following organisations provide training on behalf of ITS:

- Aspire Training Company
- Barnsley Community Build
- Barnsley Equestrian Centre
- Barnsley FC's Community and Sports Education Trust
- Dimensions Training Solutions
- Lynx Training and Development
- Optimas Training
- Talent Training

<b>Type of provision</b>	<b>Number of enrolled learners in 2009/10</b>
<b>Provision for young learners:</b> Foundation learning	129 full-time learners
<b>Employer provision:</b> Apprenticeships	189 apprentices

## Summary report

Grades: 1 is outstanding; 2 is good; 3 is satisfactory; 4 is inadequate

<b>Overall effectiveness of provision</b>	<b>Grade 2</b>
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<b>Capacity to improve</b>	<b>Grade 2</b>
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	<b>Grade</b>
Outcomes for learners	2
Quality of provision	2
Leadership and management	2
Safeguarding	2
Equality and diversity	2

<b>Subject Areas</b>	
Health, public services and care	2
Transportation operations and maintenance	3
Retailing and wholesaling	2
Preparation for life and work	3
Business, administration and law	2

## Overall effectiveness

8. ITS is a good provider. The senior management team and trustees have developed and improved the provision since the last inspection. Prudent financial management has enabled good use of the company's reserves to invest in much improved accommodation and resources that provide a good and well-resourced learning environment, accessible to all learners and staff. The provider has good capacity to improve further, demonstrated through its record of implementing successful improvement actions.
  
9. The overall pace of improvement over three years in the achievement of qualifications is good. The rate at which learners complete their programme within the planned time shows a similar improvement trend. Learners develop good skills and knowledge, make good progress and enjoy learning.

10. Teaching and learning are good overall. Learning resources are good and staff are knowledgeable and well qualified. Assessment practices are good. Targets set at learners' progress reviews are not precise enough to guide learner development sufficiently well.
11. The range of provision is extensive. It attracts a wide range of learners and successfully meets their needs. Links with employers and partners are highly productive. Care, guidance and support are good and contribute significantly to improved learner retention. Learners benefit highly from strong pastoral and welfare support. Information, advice and guidance are good.
12. Senior managers provide good strategic direction that is supported by strong financial management. Partnerships with employers, learners and stakeholder groups to align the provision to meet priority needs and to improve provision are good. Safeguarding arrangements are good and learners feel safe. The promotion of equality and diversity are good and learners have a good understanding of equality and diversity. Quality improvement arrangements effectively promote improvement. The outcomes of the observation of teaching and learning process lead to improvement. The self-assessment process is satisfactory but the report does not detail sufficiently areas for further improvement.

## Main findings

- Outcomes for learners are good. When compared with the national rate, a significantly higher proportion of learners achieve their qualifications before their programme end date. The achievement of learners aged between 16 and 18 is satisfactory and improving. Learners aged over 19 consistently perform very well and in 2009/10 their performance significantly exceeded national rates. Outcomes for learners in receipt of additional support are satisfactory.
- Most learners make good progress. Progression rates to higher-level programmes are particularly good for learners aged 19 and older. The majority of learners develop good knowledge and skills that aid their employment options and opportunities to progress onto higher-level courses.
- Learners feel safe. ITS provides a safe and secure learning environment at its training centre. Staff provide particularly effective support to keep young adult learners safe, especially during times when personal situations make them very vulnerable. ITS has successfully established a culture where staff and learners are safety aware and safe working practices are effectively promoted.
- Teaching and learning are good. Learners enjoy their studies and are enthusiastic. They benefit from good learning support provided by tutors and assessors. Tutors manage group and practical activities particularly well, promoting good teamwork and motivating learners. However, a minority of tutors insufficiently plan to meet the needs of all learners.
- Assessors work flexibly to provide frequent assessment opportunities. They use good questioning techniques to check learners' progress. Learners' progress is effectively monitored through regular audits. Employers are kept well informed

of learners' progress. Targets set at progress reviews are insufficiently precise to guide learners in motor vehicle, foundation learning, and business administration.

- The range of provision is extensive. It has been expanded successfully to meet the needs of learners and employers, and business requirements. The range of provision successfully attracts foundation learners and young people not in education, employment or training. Learning programmes are adapted to meet employers' needs. Progression opportunities from foundation to advanced level learning are good.
- Well-developed partnerships with Barnsley and Calderdale colleges, local schools, employers and eight subcontracted providers have considerably enhanced the provision. Partnership arrangements enable the sharing of skills, knowledge, systems and best practice to benefit learners. The company works with around 100 employers, helping some to recruit new apprentices.
- Care, guidance and support are good. Learners particularly appreciate the good personal and welfare support, including the healthy free meals. Information, advice and guidance are good. Learners at risk of leaving their training programme receive good and timely support.
- Senior managers provide strong leadership and a clear strategic direction that has expanded and improved the provision. They work productively with a wide range of local and regional groups and employers to improve training opportunities for learners. Monitoring arrangements and target setting are effective in improving the provision.
- Arrangements to safeguard young people and vulnerable adults are good. Staff and learners have a good knowledge of safeguarding matters. A safeguarding forum regularly reviews practice to improve safeguarding arrangements. Induction and learner reviews are effectively used to raise learners' awareness and understanding of safeguarding. Learners know who to approach if they need to discuss safeguarding concerns and staff respond efficiently and effectively.
- The promotion of equality and diversity is good. The broad range of programmes successfully widens participation and contributes to social inclusion in the area. The company's single equality scheme provides a coherent approach to develop equality and diversity across the organisation. In the majority of subject areas there is good promotion of equality and diversity to learners.
- Quality improvement arrangements are effective. A range of successful actions has improved achievement in underperforming areas. The outcomes of the observations of teaching and learning lead to improvements. The self-assessment process satisfactorily identified strengths in the provision but did not sufficiently detail areas for further improvement. The quality improvement plan is an effective tool to improve performance but some actions are not precise enough.

## **What does Independent Training Services Ltd need to do to improve further?**

- Further improve the outcomes for learners aged 16–18 years by providing more effective and timely support.
- Provide tutors with the support needed to develop lesson plans that better identify how the individual needs of all learners will be met. Develop appropriate learning materials to meet learners' different levels of ability.
- Support tutors to develop the skills to set precise and time-bound targets at progress reviews to guide learner progress more effectively.
- Improve the self-assessment process by critically analysing all aspects of provision to identify accurately areas for improvement. Ensure actions in the quality improvement plan are precise and clearly identify how they will be achieved.

### **Summary of the views of users as confirmed by inspectors**

#### **What learners like:**

- always being encouraged to work hard and get more qualifications
- the help they receive in finding work placements
- the availability of free food
- achieving a nationally recognised and transferable qualification
- the knowledgeable, enthusiastic and supportive tutors and assessors
- being able to choose which units to study
- the helpful induction that showed clearly what the course was about
- feeling safe and protected at the training centre.

#### **What learners would like to see improved:**

- the amount of paperwork that needs to be completed at induction
- increased frequency of off-the-job training sessions
- the availability of resources on the virtual learning environment.

## **Summary of the views of employers as confirmed by inspectors**

### **What employers like:**

- the good and regular face-to-face contact with assessors
- the benefits of having an apprentice who can take on more responsibility as they gain experience
- the beneficial improvements in the skills and standards of work apprentices do in the workplace
- that new apprentices are found quickly by the subcontractor
- the tutors who are really helpful
- the good advice and support assessors offer
- the no-nonsense approach in responding to training needs.

### **What employers would like to see improved:**

- no improvements were identified.



## Main inspection report

### Capacity to make and sustain improvement

**Grade 2**

13. ITS demonstrates good capacity to make and sustain improvement. A clear and increasingly effective focus on learner outcomes has established a trend of good improvement over the last three years. Challenging targets are set and closely monitored and most are achieved throughout the organisation. The development of a broad range of provision, supported by carefully considered expansion of the provision, has responded very effectively to local, regional and national priorities. Good investment in high-quality accommodation and resources provides learners with a positive and comfortable learning environment. Staff are enthusiastic, well motivated and committed to the success and well-being of their learners.
14. Quality improvement arrangements are successful in improving underperforming areas and further improving better provision. The observation of the teaching and learning process is effective in improving tutor performance. The self-assessment process is well established and used satisfactorily as an improvement tool. The self-assessment report is inclusive and informative but is not sufficiently self-critical. The views of learners and employers are satisfactorily incorporated in the report.

### Outcomes for learners

**Grade 2**

15. Outcomes for learners are good. The overall pace of improvement on employer-responsive provision is good. Data for apprenticeship programmes show a three-year increase in overall success rates to three percentage points above the national rate in 2009/10. The rate at which learners complete their programme within the planned time shows a similar three-year improvement trend and in 2009/10 rates were good and well above national rates. The proportion of learners who receive additional learning support and go on to successfully achieve their vocational qualification is satisfactory.
16. At July 2011, with only a small number of learners yet to complete their intermediate apprenticeship programmes, the overall success rate shows a potential small increase. On advanced apprenticeship programmes rates have further improved and are potentially very high.
17. The overall success rate for learners aged between 16 and 18 on intermediate apprenticeships has improved over two years and is satisfactory and broadly in line with sector averages. For learners aged 19 to 24 and over 25 years of age, overall success rates have significantly increased over three years and are high.
18. On learner-responsive Foundation Learning programmes, outcomes for learners are satisfactory. Since 2008/09, progress rates for learners on what was then known as the Entry to Employment (E2E) programme show an improving trend.

In 2009/10, learner progression into apprenticeships was good. In 2010/11, learners' achievement of qualifications to enhance their employability is good.

19. Most learners make good progress in learning sessions. They develop good knowledge and skills that aid their employment options and progression opportunities to higher-level courses. In 2010/11, of those who completed their programmes, approximately 78% progressed to further learning or employment. Progression rates to further study are particularly good for learners aged 19 years and older. On the Foundation Learning programmes, learners make satisfactory progress. The standard of written work is satisfactory overall with examples of well-presented written work in functional skills.
20. Learners enjoy their programmes, are mostly well motivated and value the opportunity to acquire skills in a practical setting. They develop good work-related skills which contribute to improving their employment prospects. Learners increase in self-confidence and self-esteem as their skills develop. In retailing and wholesaling, employers recognise the greater contribution learners make to the workplace through their increased confidence levels and ability to suggest improvements to work practices. Business administration and management learners develop good skills, knowledge and additional qualifications that enhance their capacity to support and develop their work role effectively. On Foundation Learning programmes, important work skills, such as punctuality, timekeeping and effective team working, are successfully developed. Learners develop good social skills which cultivate good relationships with their peers and productive and respectful relationships with their tutors.
21. ITS provides a safe and secure learning environment at its training centre. Staff provide particularly effective support to keep young adult learners safe, especially during times when personal situations make them very vulnerable. Very timely practical support and a high level of care significantly contribute to keeping learners safe and able to continue on their programme. Some of the most vulnerable young people who were not in education, employment or training have progressed from Foundation Level programmes to sustained employment. The number of learners that have been retained on programmes has improved over a three-year period and is good. ITS has successfully established a culture where staff and learners are safety aware and safe working practices are effectively promoted.
22. A range of healthy food options are available free of charge for learners who attend the centre over the breakfast and lunchtime periods. Initiatives to promote health, sexual health and well-being are satisfactory. However, the initiatives are insufficiently publicised to ensure that learners who are based off-site have good access to them.

## The quality of provision

## Grade 2

23. The quality of teaching, training and learning is good. Learners appreciate and benefit from the personal support from tutors and assessors and most work enthusiastically to develop their skills. Tutors complete useful individual learner personal profiles to help them identify and meet their learners' needs. Increasingly confident teachers make fuller use of information and learning technology (ILT) to provide stimulating learning activities and to help learners understand theory. Many tutors skilfully manage group and practical activities. In a minority of areas lesson planning is weak and not all teachers plan sufficiently to meet the needs of individual learners, particularly those who make quicker progress in completing tasks.
24. Staff are well qualified and many have additional qualifications in functional skills, and information, advice and guidance. Accommodation and learning resources are good, with some particularly well-resourced specialist facilities.
25. Assessors work particularly flexibly and visit learners at times to accommodate their work patterns and rotas. Most assessors use good questioning techniques to check learners' ability to apply theory to practice. Learners' progress is monitored and accurately recorded through regular audits. Internal verifiers work particularly effectively with assessors to identify and provide appropriate support for learners at risk of not meeting their targets. Employers are kept well informed of learners' progress. Learners benefit from prompt assessment on demand when evidence is available. Assessors take good advantage of naturally occurring evidence and make productive use of professional discussions to confirm practice. The learner review process is satisfactory. However, targets set to measure learners' progress are not always sufficiently precise and do not provide sufficient guidance for learners so that they are clear about what they have to achieve and when.
26. The increased range of vocational provision is extensive and meets learners', employers' and business needs well. Learners can select optional units that are most relevant to their work roles. Learning programmes are carefully adapted to meet employers' needs and some benefit from improved work practices as a result of training. Progression opportunities from foundation- to advanced-level learning are good. Many learners progress to higher-level qualifications. Learners are encouraged to take additional qualifications to enhance their employability skills with nearly all learners being trained in safety in the workplace following their induction. A small programme of enrichment activities helps learners develop team building skills, become more confident and gain additional life skills. Initiatives to engage vulnerable learners and under-represented groups are outstanding. The provider successfully attracts foundation learners, female learners in construction and young people not in education, employment or training.
27. Good collaborative partnerships with Barnsley and Calderdale colleges, local schools, employers and eight subcontracted providers have considerably enhanced the provision. Partnership arrangements encourage the sharing of

knowledge, expertise, systems and best practice. Employer engagement is good and ITS has strong links with over 100 employers. Very good use has been made of specially commissioned research on employers' views about the provision to set a detailed agenda for improvement. Employers value the improved skills learners develop through training and apply in their workplace. The company supports employers in recruiting new apprentices. Most employers are actively involved in learner reviews. The strong foundation-learning consortium enhances training opportunities for learners.

28. Care, guidance and support are good and help learners to develop the skills they need to complete within planned timescales. Learners appreciate particularly the good personal and welfare support, including the healthy free meals and financial assistance with clothing for interviews. Learners with complex learning needs, including those with dyslexia, are referred to other organisations. Information, advice and further guidance are good and learners are clear about framework and programme requirements. They are encouraged to progress to further qualifications when they complete. Recently developed initiatives to support learners at risk of leaving their programme are having a positive effect on keeping learners on programme and helping them to progress towards a positive qualification outcome.

## **Leadership and management**

## **Grade 2**

29. Leadership and management are good. The chief executive and senior management team are well informed about local, regional and national training priorities. They have effectively steered the company through organisational change and significant growth to put ITS in a better position to meet these priorities. The company and its board of trustees have a clear strategic direction that is well supported by strong and effective financial management. The company's mission is being achieved successfully through effective leadership, challenging target setting and rigorous performance monitoring. Staff training is extensive and satisfactorily aligned to meet the company's objectives in the improvement and business plans.
30. Senior managers provide a supportive and positive culture that is successfully focused on improving outcomes for learners. Staff are well qualified and experienced. The standard of learning resources and accommodation is good.
31. The organisation's board of trustees provides effective support for the senior management team and the company overall. Board members have identified that they need to develop further their skills in governance, broaden the range of skills at board level and provide a more informed challenge to the senior management team to support organisational development.
32. Arrangements for safeguarding young people and adults are good. Staff and learners are well informed about safeguarding matters and procedures. ITS has clear policies and procedures relating to Criminal Records Bureau (CRB) checks for staff, learners in specific occupational sectors requiring CRB checks, volunteers, trustees and subcontractors. A safeguarding forum, comprising

designated safeguarding officers from ITS and representatives from subcontractors, regularly reviews and shares practice that effectively and consistently improves safeguarding arrangements. A wide range of risk assessments review aspects of the provision and specific arrangements for identified vulnerable learners, but records are not kept centrally to ensure they are easily accessible. Staff training is good and frequent, and it ensures all staff have a thorough understanding of current safeguarding requirements. Induction and learner reviews are effectively used to raise learners' awareness and understanding of safeguarding. Learners understand who to approach if they need to discuss safeguarding concerns. Staff respond quickly to concerns raised, are clear about disclosure arrangements and involve outside agencies appropriately. Links with the local Safeguarding Children's Board and other agencies are strong and used appropriately to seek guidance and support.

33. Equality of opportunity arrangements are good. Promoting equality and diversity is a key strategic and operational aim for staff and is supported by effective staff training and development. The broad range and types of programmes provide good opportunities for learners and employers to access training and personal development at a level to suit their needs. Learner participation has increased significantly since the last inspection and the provision is contributing well to the regional aim of reducing the number of young people who are not in education, employment or training. The recent development of an academy at ITS provides learners with good access to a wide range of apprenticeship programmes that meet local priorities and the interests of learners. Promoting equality and diversity is a key strategic and operational aim for staff, supported by effective staff training and development.
34. Equality and diversity are effectively promoted across the organisation by an equality officer, the equality and diversity forum and through ITS's single equality scheme. A range of initiatives promote equality and diversity very effectively to learners through, for example, a range of activities in induction, good visual displays around the centre and through an annual equality poster competition. The further development of learners' understanding of equality and diversity through reviews and within the curriculum is less effective in engineering. The equality officer works effectively with employers, subcontractors and staff teams to challenge and further promote organisational development in this area. Good investment has taken place to improve access arrangements and the overall learning environment for learners with disabilities. Focused actions to narrow the achievement gap of different groups is underdeveloped.
35. Productive links with employers bring tangible benefits to learners and support the organisational business development needs well. Learners are satisfactorily involved in developing some areas of the provision through the use of questionnaires and networking. Employer involvement in the development of programmes is good.

36. Quality improvement arrangements are satisfactory overall and effective in improving outcomes for learners. Performance-monitoring arrangements are effective. ITS has implemented a range of effective actions to improve learner outcomes in underperforming areas. Improvement actions include an improved initial advice and guidance service for learners and employers, closer scrutiny of learner progress, the introduction of risk assessment to identify learners at risk of leaving the programme and the provision of more timely support when learners' progress against targets slows down. Monitoring arrangements for subcontracted provision effectively identify issues and develop timely improvement plans.
37. Arrangements to assure the quality of teaching and learning processes are robust. All stages of training and learning are observed. Tutors appreciate the help they receive in improving their practice. Action points identified through observing learning sessions are followed up promptly although the impact of improvement is not systematically recorded. Inspectors observed greater variation in the quality of teaching and learning than was reflected in the summary profile of grades awarded by the learning observation team.
38. The self-assessment report is inclusive. The grades in the report match those awarded by inspectors. The provider accurately identified most of the strengths of the provision but was insufficiently self-critical when identifying areas for improvement. The quality improvement plan is used satisfactorily to drive improvement. However, not all actions describe in sufficient detail how they will be achieved.
39. ITS provides good value for money. It has invested significant resources to improve its training premises and extend staff development activities to improve the learners' experience. It secures good outcomes for learners. There is an active sustainability agenda to reduce the organisation's carbon footprint through waste recycling and investment in solar power.

## Subject areas

### Health, public services and care

### Grade 2

#### Context

40. ITS provides training in care and childcare from foundation to advanced level. Of the 121 learners completing apprenticeships, 66 are on intermediate apprenticeships and 45 are on advanced apprenticeships in care. Of the 10 learners on childcare programmes, six are intermediate apprentices and four are advanced apprentices in childcare. A small number of learners are completing a foundation childcare programme. Twenty-nine learners are studying an NVQ at level 4 in leadership and management. All childcare provision is taught by two subcontractors. Twelve learners are apprentices at ITS within a recently launched apprenticeship academy.

#### Key findings

- Outcomes for learners are good. Overall success rates are good and show a three-year improvement trend from 2007/08 to 2009/10. A high proportion of learners complete their programme within their planned time. In 2010/11, success rates on advanced apprenticeships remain high. On intermediate apprenticeships, success rates have declined.
- Learners are enthusiastic, enjoy their learning and receive good support from their assessors. They develop good skills and confidence that improve their effectiveness in the workplace. Learners are able to apply learning to their role that increases their opportunities for employability. Most learners make good progress. However, the small number of intermediate childcare apprentices make slow progress.
- Learners feel safe in the workplace. The promotion of safeguarding practices is used effectively through the curriculum. Safeguarding and safe working practices, promoted very effectively to learners, are an integral part of progress reviews.
- Teaching and learning are good. The well-planned individual coaching and group teaching successfully develop learning. Effective use of questioning helps the learners develop their knowledge and apply theoretical concepts to practical activities. Activities to support less able learners are good, but are insufficiently developed to stretch and challenge the more able learners.
- Target setting at learner progress reviews is precise and learners clearly understand what work they must complete before the next review. Assessors do not share with learners an overview of their progress to-date against all components of the programme, which restricts learners from taking ownership of their learning.
- Assessment practice is good, particularly for advanced apprentices and NVQ level 4 learners. Learners have good access to assessment opportunities. Assessors meet learners frequently and for a sufficient length of time to enable

frequent assessment and review of learning to take place. The use of ILT to access the virtual learning environment and other learning resources when visiting learners in the workplace is insufficient.

- Employer engagement is good. Employers are highly satisfied with the service provided by ITS. Employers value the good level of training and support their learners receive. They recognise the improvement in skills and individual development of learners at work who are able to take on greater levels of responsibility.
- The wide range of courses and progression opportunities from foundation level to advanced-level programmes meets the needs and interest of learners particularly well. A range of additional qualifications further improves learners' skills and employment options.
- The promotion of equality and diversity is good. Interesting and vibrant displays produced by learners promote awareness. Equality and diversity is well established within the curriculum area. Assessors have a good understanding of equality and diversity and reflect this in their teaching.
- Programme management is good. Staff are well qualified and benefit from a good range of staff development activities. Monitoring of learners' progress is good with good systems to identify learners at risk of not achieving. Assessors work closely with employers to identify improvements and develop suitable programmes.
- Quality improvement processes are effective. Frequent team and standardisation meetings concentrate on aspects of safeguarding, equality and diversity and sharing of good practice. The internal verification process is thorough. However, insufficient attention is given to reporting identified developmental areas in assessors' performance. The self-assessment report is mostly accurate and takes account of the views of learners and employers.

### **What does Independent Training Services Ltd need to do to improve further?**

- Provide better and more timely support for childcare learners who are making slow progress.
- When planning teaching sessions, develop learning activities that provide challenge for more able learners.
- Further develop the use of ILT to support a wider range of learning activities and to give learners better access to online learning materials.
- Ensure learners have a record of their progress against the qualification to give them more ownership of their own learning.



## Transportation operations and maintenance

## Grade 3

### Context

41. Twenty-five learners are completing apprenticeship programmes in vehicle maintenance and repair. Sixteen learners are intermediate apprentices and nine are advanced apprentices. Learners are employed by local garages and attend the centre weekly for theory sessions. The majority of learners are white and male.

### Key findings

- Outcomes for learners are satisfactory and improving. Overall success rates from 2007 to 2010 were inadequate. In 2010/11, success rates are at the national rate and are significantly above the national rate for learners completing their programme within the planned time. Of the leavers due to complete this year, only two remain on programme and they are on target to achieve.
- The majority of learners make satisfactory progress, with many new learners making good progress and completing their programme early. Learners successfully complete externally accredited additional qualifications during their first-year training which include health and safety, first aid, and manual handling certificates.
- Learners develop good practical skills. They progressively develop trade-specific skills to motor industry standards. Learners confidently work on a variety of different vehicles. The standard of learners' written work is satisfactory. They enjoy their learning and know the progress they are making. Learners confirm they feel safe. They use appropriate personal protective equipment and adopt safe working practices.
- Teaching and learning are satisfactory. Tutors plan a suitable range of activities to interest learners. Effective use is made of vehicle parts to consolidate practical learning principles. However, some activities, such as copying information that is readily available on the virtual learning environment, waste valuable teaching time. Information and learning technology is used effectively to support learning. Learning materials are of a high standard.
- Assessment practice is satisfactory. Assessments are well planned and assessors visit learners frequently in the workplace. A suitable range of evidence is used to meet awarding body requirements. Learners are given clear guidance on what they have to do to prepare for future assessments. Effective support is provided for the few learners whose training is delivered solely in the workplace.
- Progress reviews are satisfactory. Some targets, however, are insufficiently precise and learners are unclear about what they have to achieve by the next review. Assessors do not always develop learners' understanding of equality and diversity in a meaningful way.

- The provision is satisfactory in meeting the needs of learners and employers. Advanced apprentices benefit from additional specialist courses that enhance their employment prospects, for example air-conditioning refrigerant handling. Progression from foundation learning onto apprenticeship programmes is satisfactory and is good from intermediate to advanced apprenticeships.
- The use of partnerships to develop the provision is good. ITS has good links with a training organisation in Austria. Learners benefit greatly from a two-week exchange programme where they work in motor-vehicle placements in Austria. Links with local companies are satisfactory. Many companies have long-established relationships with ITS and speak positively about the service offered.
- Care, guidance and support are good. Personal and welfare support are good. Improved initial assessment quickly identifies learners who require additional learning support. Those identified receive prompt support. The success rate for these learners is high. Learners receive satisfactory information, advice and guidance which are discussed effectively at progress reviews.
- Leadership and management are satisfactory. The effective recent work to improve the poor performance is now showing in improved success rates and improved employer satisfaction. In the monthly management meetings, data are now appropriately used to monitor all aspects of performance and to improve provision.
- Engagement with users to promote improvement is satisfactory. Extensive research and analysis of ITS's employer base has resulted in significant improvement in communications and much more involvement of employers in linking on- and off-the-job training and in planning learning in the workplace to cover all aspects of the apprenticeship. The use of feedback from learners effectively contributes to improvements.
- The self-assessment process is broadly satisfactory and inclusive. The self-assessment report lacks detail and is insufficiently self-critical. The quality improvement plan is bringing about improvements.

### **What does Independent Training Services Ltd need to do to improve further?**

- Further improve success rates by closely monitoring learner progress to ensure that learners complete within their planned time.
- Provide training for staff to develop and write improvement targets that are clear, precise and time-bound to guide learners better during their progress reviews.
- Improve learners' knowledge and understanding of equality and diversity by developing and using more effective strategies particularly during progress reviews.
- Improve the accuracy of the self-assessment report by using a more detailed self-critical analysis of the programme area to contribute to the judgements in the report.

## Retailing and wholesaling

## Grade 2

### Context

42. ITS offers training in retail to 138 learners, 31 of whom are male. Of these, 113 are intermediate apprentices and 17 are advanced apprentices. All of them are employed by Co-operative Societies and work in stores across South and West Yorkshire. The remaining eight learners are employed by ITS and work in the newly created retail academy. ITS provides off-the-job training and all assessment activity.

### Key findings

- Outcomes for learners are good. The overall success rate for apprentices in 2009/10 was above the national average. The proportion of apprentices who complete their programme within agreed timescales is high. Apprentices aged 16 to 18 years perform particularly well. Learners are making satisfactory progress.
- Learners develop good vocational and personal skills, and knowledge. Training provides learners with the opportunity to increase their understanding of the retail sector and the work practices in Co-operative Societies. Employers recognise the greater contribution learners make to the workplace through having increased confidence levels and being able to suggest improvements to work practices, for example analysing levels of food wastage in stores.
- Learners demonstrate a satisfactory awareness of safe working practices. Assessors effectively raise learners' awareness of health and safety in the workplace at induction. Reviews of learners' progress effectively reinforce health and safety practice. Learners in the retail academy develop a good understanding of health and safety theory.
- Individual coaching is good. Tutors use highly detailed standard lesson plans. However, the plans are unrelated to a particular group of learners and contain information that often is not relevant. Tutors make good use of their professional retail experience, illustrating discussions with relevant industry-specific examples. External publications are used effectively to demonstrate current industry practice. Good use is made of ILT to enhance learning.
- Key skills training develops learners' work-related and personal skills. However, for some learners key skills are introduced too late in the programme and their opportunities to gather relevant evidence are limited. Assessment is thorough. Good use is made of professional discussion to check learners' understanding. The well-planned research tasks extend learners' knowledge of the retail sector and in-store systems.
- Assessors are appropriately qualified. Employers value the professional expertise of ITS staff which, in some instances, has brought them business benefits. Resources are satisfactory overall but some externally sourced learning materials are not of a professional standard.

- In ITS's retail academy, learners benefit from a good range of additional qualifications. These include externally accredited courses in food safety, manual handling, health and safety, first aid, and employability and personal development. Learners in the workplace also have the opportunity to attend these courses.
- Tutors and assessors build strong working partnerships with employers, with store personnel seeing ITS staff as an extension of their workforce. Much work has been done with the Co-operative Society to combine the Society's training with the training and assessment provided by ITS. Store managers recognise the effective way that assessors understand their business and use their knowledge appropriately to plan assessment.
- Support for learners is good. Assessors make early morning or weekend visits to learners, responding to work patterns. Some assessors have set up work internet sites to provide online support. Joint working between the assessor, employer and key skills tutors fully supports learners. The use of initial assessment results is not effective enough to identify sufficiently challenging completion timescales for more experienced learners.
- ITS responds well to local priorities and has established the retail academy. Learners are carefully recruited and employed by ITS to study at the academy. Learners work on their certificate in retail knowledge during a six-week block of training, followed by a short work trial with carefully selected employers who guarantee learners a job at the end of this period.
- Learners develop a good understanding of equality and diversity and the arrangements to safeguard their personal health and well-being. Effectively introduced at induction, these aspects are developed through a range of initiatives. They reinforce learners' understanding and effectively combine with measures implemented by employers, including a wide range of policies and procedures and the provision of a confidential telephone helpline.
- There is a wide variation in the quality and content of a range of documents, including individual learning plans, reviews of progress and lesson plans. Although standardisation events take place, they mainly focus on qualification-related issues and not the quality of documentation used to support learners' development.

### **What does Independent Training Services Ltd need to do to improve further?**

- Use the results of learners' initial assessment to determine sufficiently challenging timescales for programme completion.
- Review the content of lesson plans to ensure it is appropriate for the purpose and pertinent to the topic being covered.
- Introduce key skills earlier in the apprenticeship programme to maximise opportunities for learning and to allow learners to collect relevant evidence.
- Develop quality arrangements to improve the standard of documentation and resources, including individual learning plans, learner progress reviews and externally sourced learning materials.

## Preparation for life and work

## Grade 3

### Context

43. Of the 139 foundation learners, all are aged between 16 and 18 years and 53% are male. The programme provides a range of vocational options in warehousing, hospitality, sport and leisure, horse care, hair and beauty, construction skills, motor vehicle, digital arts and media, and business administration. ITS subcontracts almost all of the provision to seven local training providers. Learners receive training and support to help them develop social, personal, employability and vocational skills, and to gain qualifications in mathematics, English, and information and communication technology. Programmes last between 10 and 36 weeks and learners attend between 12 and 24 hours each week.

### Key findings

- Outcomes for learners are satisfactory. Since 2008/09, progression outcomes for learners show an improving trend and are satisfactory. In 2009/10, learner progression to intermediate apprenticeships was good. Learners' achievement of qualifications to enhance their employability is good. Learners make satisfactory progress. The standard of work in learners' portfolios is satisfactory overall and good in functional skills.
- Learners enjoy their learning. They develop good work-related skills. They increase significantly their self-confidence and self-esteem and improve their personal skills, such as timekeeping, behaviour and attitude. These improvements prepare them well for everyday life and work. Learner progression is good. Many learners gain the skills to progress to higher-level programmes, obtain employment or gain voluntary work.
- Learners are well protected through good safeguarding arrangements. They benefit from the very good support and guidance they receive from their tutors. Learners have a clear understanding of health and safety, and adopt safe working practices. They have a good understanding of their responsibilities. Learners feel safe and secure in their learning environments and have a satisfactory understanding of internet safety measures.
- Teaching and learning are satisfactory. Learners' participation in practical sessions is good. Tutors do not take sufficient account of the results from diagnostic literacy and numeracy assessments, individual learner targets or the variation in learner ability when planning learning. Information and learning technology is insufficiently used to add interest and variety to learning activities.
- Assessment is satisfactory. Assessors give good individual guidance and encouragement to learners but written feedback is not always sufficiently detailed.
- Learners' individual learning plans and progress reviews are satisfactory. They value the feedback they receive. However, target setting is insufficiently precise

and does not identify in enough detail the development needed to improve work skills such as poor timekeeping. Some reviews fail to record in sufficient detail learner development and progress towards meeting their individual goals.

- Resources are satisfactory overall and are good at ITS's premises. Learners benefit from good facilities for practical work. Facilities vary between subcontractors. The best provide well-equipped training rooms with ILT facilities and good access to computers.
- The range of provision meets learners' needs particularly well and is successful in attracting learners from priority and under-represented groups. Learners can choose from a wide variety of vocational options that are relevant to their ambitions and employment goals, and which provide them with good progression opportunities.
- Partnership working is very good. The very effective collaborative working with the seven local subcontracted training providers ensures that learners benefit from a standard programme and approach to training. Links with referral agencies and schools are used effectively to recruit learners to programmes.
- Care, guidance and support for learners are satisfactory overall. Staff provide very good pastoral support, and respond promptly and effectively to the problems learners face. Initial assessment is satisfactory and learners access satisfactory support. Learners receive good information and advice to support progression.
- Leadership and management are satisfactory. Communication and teamwork across the subcontractors are good, with regular team meetings. Data are used to set overall improvement targets for success and to monitor contract compliance. However, the use of data to monitor learner performance for each subcontractor is insufficient.
- ITS staff are fully involved in the self-assessment process and learners' views are routinely sought to improve the provision. The use of quality improvement arrangements is having insufficient impact. For example, outcomes from the monitoring of learning plans and reviews do not lead to sufficient improvements across all subcontracted provision.

### **What does Independent Training Services Ltd need to do to improve further?**

- Plan teaching and learning activities using learners' initial assessment results, individual learning goals and the range and levels of ability within the learning group. Use ILT to provide interest and variety to learning activities.
- Develop tutors' skills to enable them to set precise targets in individual learning plans and at learners' progress reviews. Focus on setting targets for learners' development that include important employability skills. Improve the assessment of learners' progress in achieving their learning goals.
- Make better use of management information to analyse data, monitor learner performance by individual subcontractors and set improvement actions to improve learners' outcomes.
- Implement quality assurance processes and activities and ensure high quality and greater consistency of practice across all subcontractors.

## Business, administration and law

## Grade 2

### Context

44. ITS provides intermediate and advanced level apprenticeships in business administration, customer service, sales, telesales, team leader, and management programmes. Of the 75 learners on programmes, most learners are aged between 16 and 18 years and are advanced apprentices. Subcontractors deliver the majority of the provision. The largest programme offered is administration with 32 learners. Sixteen learners are employed by ITS and work in the newly created business academy on a six-week study block followed by a short work trial prior to gaining employment.

### Key findings

- Outcomes for learners are good. In 2009/10, overall success rates were slightly below national averages, particularly on the business administration intermediate apprenticeship which had the majority of learners. The percentage of learners who completed their programme on time exceeded national averages. In 2010/11, learners are making excellent progress and most have already successfully completed their programme.
- Learners are motivated and enthusiastic and they enjoy their training and learning. They make good progress towards achieving their qualifications. They develop good levels of self-confidence and adjust well to the challenges of work. Qualification and career progression are good, with some learners promoted to positions of responsibility. The good skills, knowledge and additional qualifications they attain enhance their capacity to support their work role.
- Learners feel particularly safe in the workplace and in the centre and have an appropriate understanding of health and safety priorities. They have a good awareness of safeguarding matters and know who to raise any concerns with if they need support.
- The overall quality of provision is good. Teaching and learning is satisfactory overall. The well-planned training sessions are of a satisfactory standard. In some sessions, there is insufficient sharing of objectives with learners. Information and learning technology resources are used particularly effectively to support training, assessment and portfolio building.
- Assessment is good. Frequent assessment visits enable a greater proportion of learners to make rapid progress and achieve well before their expected end date. Assessment and monitoring of learners' progress are good. Assessors plan their visits very skilfully, at times to suit learner and employer requirements.
- The opportunity to review their progress regularly motivates learners. However, targets are often insufficiently precise and do not give learners enough guidance to enable them to extend their understanding and knowledge between assessor visits.



- The broad range of programmes meets the needs of learners and employers particularly effectively. The academy provision for younger learners is very good and successfully prepares them for the world of work and work placement in a supportive training environment. Learners and their employers are actively involved in selecting relevant units of study that complement job roles, business needs and learners' career plans.
- ITS works effectively with employers. Assessors play a key role in ensuring good communication with employers. Employers are highly satisfied with the working relationship and particularly value their opportunities to contribute to the development of programmes. Surveys show a high level of employer satisfaction. Drop-in workshops, offered on some employers' premises, provide learners with additional help with their studies.
- Support for learners is good. Learners receive good information and guidance at induction and during progress reviews to help them make informed choices about further study and career progression. Good pastoral support is readily available for academy learners based at ITS. All learners particularly appreciate and benefit from the good support from their assessors.
- Programme management is good. Tutors and assessors are well qualified and have good industrial experience. Accommodation at the training centre and in the workplace provides a professional and purposeful learning environment. Learners have access to a virtual learning environment enabling them to develop their studies further.
- Good quality improvement arrangements have led to improved internal verification processes and the monitoring of learners' progress, which is reported monthly. Assessors are set challenging targets to ensure learners complete their programmes. The self-assessment report is mostly accurate. However, some judgements are not sufficiently clear.

### **What does Independent Training Services Ltd need to do to improve further?**

- Ensure tutors set learning objectives for each learning session that are shared with learners so that they fully understand their intended learning outcomes.
- Improve assessors' skills to enable them to set measurable and precise short- and medium-term targets to guide learners' progress towards achievement of their qualification.

## Information about the inspection

45. Two of Her Majesty's Inspectors (HMI) and six additional inspectors, assisted by the provider's operational manager, as nominee, carried out the inspection. Inspectors also took account of the provider's most recent self-assessment report and development plans, comments from the funding bodies, the previous inspection report, reports from the inspectorate's quality monitoring inspection, and data on learners and their achievement over the period since the previous inspection.
46. Inspectors used group and individual interviews, telephone calls and emails to gain the views of learners and employers. They also looked at questionnaires learners and employers had recently completed for the provider. They observed learning sessions, assessments and progress reviews. Inspectors collected evidence from programmes in each of the subject areas the provider offers.

**Record of Main Findings (RMF)**  
**Independent Training Services Ltd**  
**Learning types: 14 – 16:** Young apprenticeships; Diplomas; **16-18 Learner responsive:** FE full- and part-time courses, Foundation learning tier, including Entry to Employment; **19+ responsive:** FE full- and part-time courses; **Employer responsive:** Train to Gain, apprenticeships

Grades <b>using the 4 point scale</b> 1: Outstanding; 2: Good; 3: Satisfactory; 4: Inadequate	Overall	16-18 Learner responsive	Employer responsive
<b>Approximate number of enrolled learners</b>			
Full-time learners	668	265	403
Part-time learners	0	0	0
<b>Overall effectiveness</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>Capacity to improve</b>	2		
<b>Outcomes for learners</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>2</b>
How well do learners achieve and enjoy their learning?	2		
How well do learners attain their learning goals?	2		
How well do learners progress?	2		
How well do learners improve their economic and social well-being through learning and development?	2		
How safe do learners feel?	2		
<i>Are learners able to make informed choices about their own health and well-being?*</i>	3		
<i>How well do learners make a positive contribution to the community?*</i>	n/a		
<b>Quality of provision</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>2</b>
How effectively do teaching, training and assessment support learning and development?	2		
How effectively does the provision meet the needs and interests of users?	2		
How well partnerships with schools, employers, community groups and others lead to benefits for learners?	2		
How effective are the care, guidance and support learners receive in helping them to achieve?	2		
<b>Leadership and management</b>	<b>2</b>		
How effectively do leaders and managers raise expectations and promote ambition throughout the organisation?	2		
<i>How effectively do governors and supervisory bodies provide leadership, direction and challenge?*</i>	3		
How effectively does the provider promote the safeguarding of learners?	2		
How effectively does the provider actively promote equality and diversity, tackle discrimination and narrow the achievement gap?	2		
How effectively does the provider engage with users to support and promote improvement?	2		
How effectively does self-assessment improve the quality of the provision and outcomes for learners?	3		
How efficiently and effectively does the provider use its available resources to secure value for money?	2		

\*where applicable to the type of provision

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