

Inter Training Services Limited

Reinspection report

Unique reference number: 52489

Name of lead inspector: Andy Harris HMI

Last day of inspection: 9 September 2011

Type of provider: Independent learning provider

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Information about the provider

1. Inter Training Services Limited (ITS) has been in business since 1996. It is based in Horndean, near Portsmouth, and specialises in delivering intermediate and advanced apprenticeship programmes in hairdressing for businesses in Surrey, Berkshire and Hampshire. Government-funded training forms the vast majority of its work. All training delivery takes place on employers' premises. ITS staff provide most of the theoretical training, and a proportion of the practical training. In-salon staff supplement the practical training, whilst assessment is carried out by ITS's own staff or specialist staff in salons.
2. At the previous inspection in July 2010, ITS's overall effectiveness was judged to be inadequate. All aspects of the provision were actually judged to be satisfactory, except for the key area of outcomes for learners. The main concerns were low success rates and slow progress for apprentices. While the general approach to training has remained the same at ITS since the previous inspection, there have been many changes in staff, management structures, and a significant change in the way that training is monitored and action is taken where appropriate.
3. ITS currently has no subcontracting arrangement with other providers.

Type of provision	Number of enrolled learners in 2009/10
Employer provision: Apprenticeships	89 apprentices

Summary report

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

Overall effectiveness of provision		Grade 2
Capacity to improve		Grade 2
		Grade
Outcomes for learners		2
Quality of provision		2
Leadership and management		2
Safeguarding		3
Equality and diversity		2
Subject Areas		
Hairdressing and beauty therapy		2

Overall effectiveness

4. ITS now ensures that learners have a good experience on their hairdressing apprenticeships. Courses are carefully planned in conjunction with salon managers and learners and cover practical, theoretical and particularly key skills training effectively. The number of learners who successfully complete their course has improved well since the previous inspection to a satisfactory level, and a good proportion of learners complete their course before their planned finish date.
5. Learners enjoy their apprenticeships, and the great majority of current learners are now progressing well on their course. Many learners go on to more responsible roles in their salons and take higher level qualifications.
6. The support that learners receive from ITS and their salons is good. Progress reviews are good and clearly let learners know how well they are doing. Effective support systems help learners with personal problems or with aspects of literacy and numeracy.
7. The management of the provision is now good. ITS managers have thoroughly overhauled the way they monitor the training. A very effective use of computers, linked with online documentation, means that any potential problems with learners, or even staff, are quickly identified and remedial action

is taken promptly. However, ITS has been slow in ensuring that those in salons who deliver training on its behalf have appropriate teaching qualifications.

8. ITS ensures that learners understand aspects of safety and equality of opportunity that may affect them or their clients. Some administrative aspects of ensuring that staff are properly checked to work with young or vulnerable learners are not fully effective.
9. The carefully planned and effective use of salon staff and resources ensures that ITS gets good value from its government funding.

Main findings

- The rate at which learners successfully complete their hairdressing apprenticeship has improved over the past 18 months and is now at a satisfactory level. The completion of the courses by the learners' planned end date has improved significantly, to a good level. The great majority of learners now stay on their programme and make good progress.
- Learners are thoroughly enjoying their courses. They welcome the mix of training while gaining experience through working in salons with supportive managers. A good proportion of those who complete their intermediate course move onto a higher level qualification after a period of consolidation in their salon.
- ITS works closely with salons to ensure that learners have a well-structured training programme, with practical and theoretical training covered in a timely and logical way. The company plans assessment of learners' skills carefully. Support for those learners taking key skills qualifications is particularly good.
- Regular progress reviews, and a simple but effective way of tracking learners' progress, both help motivate learners and effectively aid the planning of the programmes. Some targets in reviews and plans are insufficiently precise and learners do not always understand clearly what is required. Staff and learners use computers well to manage and support the training programmes.
- The programmes are well designed to meet the individual needs of learners and to fit in with salon working practices. Communication between salons and ITS staff is very good.
- Care and support for learners are good. Apart from the very helpful routine support from salon and ITS staff, a specialist 'life coach' is used well to support learners with specific personal problems. Additional help for learners who have difficulties with aspects of literacy and numeracy is also effective.
- Leaders and managers at ITS, after identifying weaknesses in the provision, implemented a comprehensive action plan to ensure improvements were made. Among other actions, a thorough restructuring of staff responsibilities and the very effective use of computer-based systems to monitor training ensure the prompt delivery of programmes. However, some systems are not readily available to learners and assessors, and some redundant systems remain online.

- Staff development is satisfactory, with an improved system of observing teaching and learning leading to appropriate personal development. The increasing amount of in-house training is generally effective and reduces costs. ITS has been slow to implement plans to ensure that in-salon staff who deliver training have appropriate teaching qualifications.
- The promotion of learners' understanding of both safeguarding and equality of opportunity is good. Projects for learners, designed by ITS, supplement induction training, and both aspects are routinely reinforced in progress reviews and in elements of training that relate the subjects well to hairdressing examples. ITS tries to carry out such procedures as Criminal Records Bureau (CRB) checks in excess of mandatory requirements, but some policies and practices are weak.
- The annual self-assessment process is satisfactory. Views of partners, particularly those of the salon managers, are gathered in a variety of informal ways. Effective quality improvement is driven more by the very thorough, constant monitoring system and prompt management action than by the annual process. A very helpful post-inspection action plan involved all staff in improving the provision, although further versions of that plan are becoming too complex.
- ITS ensures that government funding is used effectively to provide good training. The appropriate use of salon premises and the well-planned involvement of salon managers and staff have reduced overheads. ITS has developed some of the training material and most of the useful monitoring software systems in-house, at reasonable cost. The company uses resources well to give individual support to learners, ensuring that more stay successfully on programme.

What does Inter Training Services need to do to improve further?

- Make sure that short-term targets used at progress reviews are precise, and that learners understand them without them having to translate them into their own words.
- Build on the very good work of placing management of learning material online by increasing the availability of some systems to learners and in-salon assessors and by ensuring that outdated systems are deleted.
- Revise and then implement plans for all relevant staff who deliver training for the apprenticeship programme to undertake appropriate teaching qualifications to improve further the quality of teaching and ensure ITS meets contractual requirements.
- Complete and implement the review of CRB requirements, with particular focus on how to deal with checks that have been carried out with previous employers, and on the frequency of checks.
- Ensure that quality improvement planning remains a useful and understandable tool for improvement and does not become an overly complex, routine management system.

Summary of the views of users as confirmed by inspectors**What learners like:**

- the very regular contact with their ITS link person and the encouragement they receive from them
- the individual, personalised training in their own salons
- the personal support
- the simple explanations of progress that motivate them to continue to complete at a good pace
- the way that key skills are made relevant to their employment.

What learners would like to see improved:

- the opportunity to attend the occasional group workshop on professional topics.

Summary of the views of employers as confirmed by inspectors**What employers like:**

- the very close working relationship with ITS
- the joint planning and monitoring of the learner's programme
- the professionalism of the ITS staff
- being able to call on ITS support resources for learners' additional learning needs and personal problems
- the flexibility of the approach to training.

What employers would like to see improved:

- nothing of significance.

Main inspection report

Capacity to make and sustain improvement

Grade 2

10. Two years ago, in its self-assessment report, ITS identified weaknesses in its provision and started improvement activities. The inspection that followed shortly afterwards noted the changes but judged that they had not, at that time, had sufficient impact, particularly on outcomes. Since then ITS has put significant effort into further identifying underlying problems, changing staff structures and responsibilities, implementing a well-researched improvement plan. A very effective monitoring system is in place and has ensured that previous slow progress has been largely eradicated.
11. Systems and procedures are now well embedded and are routinely helping learners. The proportion of learners successfully completing their programme went up by seven percentage points in the most recent year, with prompt completion jumping by 12 points, to well above national averages. ITS has built on previous satisfactory aspects with better inspection grades in important aspects such as teaching and learning. A culture of improvement is now firmly established in the company, and inspectors judge its capacity for sustainable improvement to be good.

Outcomes for learners

Grade 2

12. Learners enjoy their learning. They recognise the high standards of work that their salons require and are well motivated to achieve that level of performance. Learners' interpersonal skills are good and learners communicate with clients with confidence. Advanced apprentices develop good employability skills, in particular when cutting and colouring their clients' hair.
13. Overall success rates for apprenticeship programmes have improved to a satisfactory level. Rates of successful completion within learners' agreed timescales have improved well and are good for intermediate apprentices and very good for advanced apprentices. Learners are meeting their learning goals and achieving individual targets. This is having a positive effect on the progress learners are making. Many learners are now achieving their apprenticeship well before their expected end date. ITS has also been successful in improving progression for learners onto advanced programmes, which is now good. There are no significant, sustained differences in achievement between learners from different backgrounds.
14. ITS has developed good learning material for apprentices regarding their health and well-being. Many topics are covered including sexual health and how to stay safe. This has had a positive effect on improving learners' awareness of their own health and well-being.

The quality of provision

Grade 2

15. Teaching, learning and assessment are good. Sessions are well planned, drawing on emerging and current fashion trends in the hairdressing industry. Learners are both challenged and motivated to learn by staff and they benefit from low learner to staff ratios. Tutors use well-planned resources effectively to improve learners' understanding of the topics being taught. Learners have satisfactory access to online learning facilities.
16. Learners make very good progress, encouraged by supportive delivery methods and flexible assessment strategies. Initial assessments are thorough and the results are clearly linked to individual training requirements and assessment. A high proportion of salons have qualified assessors which helps prompt progress. ITS's own trainer/assessors are particularly good at monitoring learners' progress, with frequent salon visits involving both employers and learners.
17. Learners understand their detailed and clear medium- and long-term targets and use their portfolios effectively to track their progress. However, some learners are not clear about what is exactly required in their short-term targets, and some rewrite these, not always accurately. Well-maintained learners' individual learning journals helpfully complement the portfolios, highlighting personal goals and identifying additional support needs. Assessment is well planned and assessors encourage learners to access their assessment plans online. This is having a positive effective on learners' speedy progress and completion of their apprenticeship.
18. Good standards of hairdressing services and customer care are maintained in the salon environment. Trainers use scenarios successfully to develop and reinforce learners' understanding of equality, diversity and safeguarding. Staff have the appropriate vocational skills and experience to meet the learners' needs and expectations.
19. The planning, delivery and attainment of key skills are good. Sessions are well organised and the company monitors learners' progress closely. ITS makes literacy and numeracy training relevant to the hairdressing industry, building on prior knowledge and improving employability opportunities.
20. ITS ensures that learners have clear progression opportunities from intermediate to advanced apprenticeships, if their salon feels this is appropriate. Learners are motivated by regular celebration of achievement, for instance at the end of units or completion of training projects.
21. Partnerships and communication with salons are very good. Regular meetings enable all aspects of the learning experience to be well planned and sustainable. The involvement of employers in recruiting suitable learners for programmes has improved, leading to improved learner achievement and completion within deadlines. The individualised learners' journal allows a flexible and personalised approach to meeting learners' needs and aspirations.

22. The provision of care, guidance and support is very good. Initial advice and guidance and assessment, and the close involvement of employers, ensure that potential problems are clearly identified. ITS uses a 'life-coach' well to give learners with specific personal problems helpful support which encourages them to stay on their programme. Tutorial and assessment support for learners is good throughout their programme.

Leadership and management

Grade 2

23. ITS leaders and managers have been very active over the past two years in dealing with the weak areas that both they and the 2010 inspection identified. Action planning has been comprehensive and targeted at the right areas. Changes in staff, structures and procedures have revitalised the company. While there is a proper degree of pragmatism and sound financial planning, there is also good ambition to improve; challenging targets have been set and generally met.
24. ITS has driven improvements in training delivery partly by the introduction of extensive and very effective routine systems for monitoring and improving staff and learners' activity. The company maintains meticulous records using locally produced spreadsheets which are simple to understand. They very neatly link with a whole range of training documentation that is kept online so that managers can check both quantity and quality of such elements as visits, progress reviews, and observations of teaching and learning. Constant reviews ensure that ITS takes constructive action promptly, from administrative level through to managerial level as appropriate, to maintain the high levels of performance now expected of staff and learners. For learners, action can lead to intervention plans, additional training support or personal support. The systems, although very good, could be improved further with wider access and the removal of outdated procedures. These systems are also linked with a much improved use of data, with information from a wide range of sources now routinely reviewed by individual managers, and at appropriate meetings, leading to action where necessary.
25. The professional development of staff directly employed by ITS is satisfactory. Induction is appropriate, and a revised system of observations of teaching and learning is helping personal development. Recent financial constraints have led to a reduction in formal training, but ITS offsets this to some extent with increased in-house training. A significant part of apprenticeship training is delivered by salon employees; this forms part of the funded apprenticeship programme. ITS has been slow in implementing plans to ensure that those who have a clear training role in the salons have relevant teaching qualifications.
26. The promotion of the understanding of safeguarding principles to staff, employers and learners is good. ITS' materials, including its own projects and workbooks, linked with constant references to the topic, mean that all involved have a good awareness of the subject. When problems are identified they are dealt with satisfactorily. Technically, ITS goes beyond mandatory requirements

in such aspects as CRB checks, but its policy and practices in this area are weak in, for example, frequency of checks and recognition of previous certification.

27. ITS has improved the promotion of equality and diversity among learners through useful training materials and very regular reinforcement of the topic during visits and training. The relevance to hairdressing and learners' personal circumstances is made clear. Like all activities, the completion of training packages and the discussion with learners are well recorded with action taken promptly if there are problems or delays. ITS undertakes routine reviews of data on performance by various groups of learners but, given that there are no significant trends, action is not needed.
28. Routine communication with staff, employers and learners is good. The formal involvement of employers and learners in self-assessment is satisfactory with views generally gathered through the informal contacts. The formal self-assessment process is satisfactory; quality improvement owes more to the rigorous routine activities than the annual process. After the previous inspection, a comprehensive quality improvement plan and linked reviews were very effective in driving change with all staff. Some elements of that approach are now becoming an overly complex routine management tool, with a reducing emphasis on key points for improvement.
29. ITS' strategy of working closely with salons ensures that it uses funds and resources well to give learners comprehensive support and training. In-house development of monitoring systems and training material has helped drive up standards at minimal cost. The training materials include a short, but appropriate, learner project on sustainability in their workplace.

Information about the inspection

30. One of Her Majesty's Inspectors and two additional inspectors, assisted by the provider's General Manager, as nominee, carried out the reinspection. Inspectors also took account of the provider's most recent self-assessment report and development plans, comments from the funding body, 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.
31. 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 and progress reviews.

Record of Main Findings (RMF)

Inter Training Services Limited

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 using the 4 point scale 1: Outstanding; 2: Good; 3: Satisfactory; 4: Inadequate	Overall	Employer responsive
Approximate number of enrolled learners		
Full-time learners	-	-
Part-time learners	68	68
Overall effectiveness	2	2
Capacity to improve	2	
Outcomes for learners	2	2
How well do learners achieve and enjoy their learning?	2	
How well do learners attain their learning goals?	3	
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>	2	
<i>How well do learners make a positive contribution to the community?*</i>	N/A	
Quality of provision	2	2
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	
Leadership and management	2	2
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>	N/A	
How effectively does the provider promote the safeguarding of learners?	3	
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?	3	
How effectively does self-assessment improve the quality of the provision and outcomes for learners?	2	
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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