

ISS UK

Inspection report

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Name of lead inspector: Nick Crombie HMI

Last day of inspection: 25 November 2011

Type of provider: Employer

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Information about the provider

1. ISS is one of the world's largest facility and service management providers in the world, operating in over 50 countries. Its United Kingdom (UK) operations started in 1968, where it now employs 43,500 staff from 144 nationalities. It has not been inspected before.
2. In February 2009 ISS signed the Skills Pledge committing it to supporting its employees to develop their literacy and numeracy skills and working towards qualifications to at least intermediate level. ISS UK first contracted directly with the National Employer Service to provide Train to Gain programmes, and subsequently with the National Apprenticeship Service for its current apprenticeship and Train to Gain provision. All learners work in third party client sites, predominantly in the Midlands, with a few learners based in London, the South and the North West of England. ISS originally contracted with three subcontractors to deliver all aspects of the programmes, but since August 2011 has worked with a single subcontractor, Babcock Training. ISS does not provide training on behalf of other providers.
3. ISS currently has 51 apprentices, and 12 Train to Gain learners. Most of the provision is at intermediate level and most learners are following business administration apprenticeships. Fifteen learners are on cleaning services programmes. Inspectors graded the business administration programmes separately but also took account of the progress made by cleaning services learners.
4. All learners are employed, mostly part-time. Of the 63 current learners, 49 are aged over 25, and 13 are between 19 and 24. Just over 20 learners are male. Fifty three learners are of White British/White other ethnic origin. Two have declared/identified learning needs.

Type of provision	Number of enrolled learners in 2010/11
Employer provision:	
Train to Gain	12
Apprenticeships	51

Summary report

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

Overall effectiveness of provision	Grade 4
Capacity to improve	Grade 4
	Grade
Outcomes for learners	2
Quality of provision	2
Leadership and management	4
Safeguarding	3
Equality and diversity	3
Subject Areas	
Business administration and law	2

Overall effectiveness

- ISS, as contract holder, has not added value to the learning programmes, all aspects of which have been, and are, delivered through subcontracting arrangements. Since August 2011, ISS has worked with only one of its original three subcontractors. ISS has not set any demanding standards or sufficiently rigorous controls for subcontractors relating to the quality and quantity of delivery required or its expectations of continuous improvement. ISS has not conducted any formal quality monitoring of the programmes. The reliability of ISS' data on learner numbers and their progress has been very poor, although the quality of these data has improved over the past three months. A very limited range of data is now being supplied to ISS by the single subcontractor, but ISS does not have its own system of data entry and verification, although it plans to develop one. ISS does not seek the views of learners, employers or subcontractors in evaluating its own performance or that of the subcontractors. ISS' self-assessment and quality improvement action planning arrangements are inadequate
- Most learners are currently achieving qualifications well and developing and applying new skills. A small group had made slow progress due to administrative issues. There have been inconsistencies in the achievement of different groups of learners, but appropriate action was taken to support all learners to achieve. The quality of provision is good, particularly the assessment

and tracking of learners' progress, but there is some variability in the depth and range.

Main findings

- In 2010/11, overall success rates for Train to Gain were very high, at 99%. In the same period, learners who completed within their planned end date did so at the national average. Overall success rates for apprentices were high in 2010/11 at 85%. A variance in attainment exists between learner groups. For example, men achieve at a higher rate than women, despite being a minority of learners.
- Learners develop their occupational skills, gain a greater understanding of their job role and how it fits with others' roles. They grow in confidence and self-esteem. Most learners learn, and consequently apply, useful additional skills in computer technology, communications and numeracy.
- The quality of assessment and training is good. The subcontractor's assessors offer supportive and flexible assessment using a highly effective e-learning and assessment package developed by the subcontractor. Learners have access to good-quality online learning resources. Some learners are disadvantaged by not having computers at work or home.
- The quality of support for learners needing additional support is variable, although generally satisfactory overall. Many are supported directly in the workplace by their assessors, but others are only directed to research support available from external agencies or resources.
- Insufficient overall coordination of the often wide range of additional training learners undertake through ISS and at client sites means that many learners do the same courses repeatedly or the course content is not mapped against their apprenticeship programme. No one has overall responsibility for coordinating and monitoring ISS learners' overall training.
- ISS operational staff and the subcontractor's assessors have a good working relationship. Workplace managers are actively engaged in reviews and fully support learners to achieve their learning aims. Learners, line managers and employers generally welcome and recognise the benefits and impact of ongoing staff development.
- Support for learners needing additional support is variable but generally satisfactory. Although most learners receive extra help in the workplace from their assessors, some assessors and ISS staff lack knowledge of how best to recognise literacy or numeracy needs, provide support or appropriate referral.
- Learners receive good initial advice and guidance. Assessors actively support learners to overcome barriers to achievement. Learners who have been out of formal education for some time receive good encouragement to re-enter and remain in learning.

- ISS's arrangements for monitoring the quality of the apprenticeship and Train to Gain programmes are poor, and over reliant on the subcontractor's own data. ISS has not set high standards for delivery, or exercised sufficiently formal, thorough or structured control over the qualitative and quantitative aspects of subcontractors' delivery. The quality of ISS's own performance management data is poor.
- ISS is developing a close working relationship with the single subcontractor. ISS' proposed new contractual arrangements with the subcontractor include improved arrangements for quality monitoring, but implementation is at a very early stage and has so far had no impact.
- Safeguarding arrangements are satisfactory and within ISS form part of the whistle blowing and risk assessment processes. The subcontractor fully meets government requirements, with enhanced Criminal Records Bureau (CRB) checks and training for all staff. Learners feel safe.
- Overall, equality and diversity arrangements are satisfactory. ISS's equality and dignity at work guidelines are very comprehensive. Promotion of equality and diversity for learners with the subcontractor is good.
- ISS' self-assessment and quality improvement planning are inadequate. The self-assessment report does not reflect the views of any subcontractor, learners or employers. No meaningful quality improvement action plan is linked with the report to tackle key areas of under-performance.

What does ISS UK need to do to improve further?

- Seek external advice to gain a full understanding of, and training in, the skills needed to effectively quality monitor, manage and develop wholly subcontracted provision in order to ensure its quality.
- Finalise and sign the proposed contractual agreement between ISS and the subcontractor. Working closely with the subcontractor, implement as a matter of urgency all of the ISS quality monitoring, data and control arrangements proposed within the agreement to effectively manage the contract.
- Significantly expand the range and quality of learner and performance management data over which ISS has direct control. Analyse these data thoroughly including identifying any variance in the achievement rates of different learner groups and formulate a strategy to remove any achievement gaps.
- Develop a fully evaluative and accurate self-assessment process, which includes input from the subcontractor, learners and employers, linked to a detailed, well-structured quality improvement action plan (QIAP) as ISS' basis for improving all areas of underperformance. Place self-assessment and the QIAP at the centre of a formal annual quality cycle.

- Identify, monitor and closely coordinate all training programmes undertaken by each learner. Include and cross-reference these in the learner's individual learning plan together with target start and completion dates, thereby ensuring that learners receive a coherent, well-planned learning experience.
- Establish an effective strategy to train all relevant staff to identify and provide appropriate support or effective signposting for learners with additional literacy, language and numeracy needs to ensure support is provided.
- Ensure that all learners have appropriate access to e-learning materials and email and that a paper-based alternative is always made available where such access is not possible so that learners are not disadvantaged.

Summary of the views of users as confirmed by inspectors

What learners like:

- that their existing skills are recognised
- informative, supportive and knowledgeable assessors
- being trained while working and being treated with respect
- learning which matches their job role and gaining a qualification
- improving their English and mathematics skills
- gaining computer skills
- an opportunity to get back into formal education
- being able to access help at home online.

What learners would like to see improved:

- more guidance on completing assignments
- changing work patterns so they can spend enough time with assessors
- a wider range of courses and levels
- a clearer link between training and getting a qualification and more opportunity for promotion.

Summary of the views of employers as confirmed by inspectors

What employers like:

- good support from the subcontractor.

What employers would like to see improved:

- no views expressed.

Main inspection report

Capacity to make and sustain improvement

Grade 4

7. Learners' current achievements are generally good, but neither historically nor across all programmes and subject areas. The quality of provision is good. However, there has been a significant lack of control and oversight of the subcontracted programmes from the outset of the contract. ISS' quality monitoring, management information and the overall strategic direction of its subcontractor-delivered programmes have been, and remain, inadequate despite a recent commitment to improve. ISS is developing a new working relationship with a single subcontractor specified in a new, but currently unsigned, contract. Within this contract ISS has identified a range of strategies and actions designed to improve significantly the depth and range of its quality monitoring activities and the integrity of the learner-related data it holds on its own, but all of these are at a very early stage of implementation and have had no practical impact.
8. Self-assessment and quality improvement planning are inadequate. Self-assessment is not central to the quality improvement process. No meaningful quality improvement action plan (QIAP) is linked with the self-assessment report. The QIAPs produced to date have very scant detail, do not address principal areas of underperformance or identify appropriate specific and time-bound improvement actions.

Outcomes for learners

Grade 2

9. Overall success rates on Train to Gain were good in 2009/10 and very high in 2010/11, at 99%. In that period, learners completing within their planned end date did so at the national average.
10. Overall success rates for apprentices were high, at 85%, however a specific group of learners in this period were hindered from completing their programme within their planned end date due to administrative issues. In business administration and law, the overall success rate was good at 86% and the rate for learners completing within their planned end date was close to the national average.
11. Across both programmes there are variations in the rate of learners' achievements, although much of this concerns learners who were with subcontractors no longer contracted to ISS. ISS has since supported many of these learners to achieve their National Vocational Qualifications (NVQs).
12. Learners enjoy their learning and appreciate working towards recognised qualifications. They become more efficient and skilled in their work. They feel valued within their workplaces and gain a sharper focus on their duties. Learners are able to see their role in the context of the wider picture at work.

Learners also gain in self-confidence, esteem and develop a better understanding of how to deal with colleagues, peers and line managers. Many learners gain and apply additional skills in computer technology, communications and numeracy.

13. Learners feel safe at work. Learners are well trained in health and safety and demonstrate a good understanding of these in their individual workplaces and job roles. Hospital and education sites in particular operate stringent health and safety policies.

The quality of provision

Grade 2

14. The quality of assessment and training is good. Assessment is highly effective and well organised. The subcontractor's assessors provide supportive and flexibly-timed visits which fit in with shift patterns. The subcontractor has developed a comprehensive online learner recording, tracking and administration system together with a suite of online resources to support learning. These are used well by assessors and learners. Very good use is made of digital voice recorders to record and upload discussions and other evidence. Learners' work is digitally photographed and uploaded onto their e-portfolios. Most learners enthusiastically embrace the use of information technology but some learners do not have internet or email access at work or home and are disadvantaged. In some cases, no paper-based alternative is offered. Assessors are appropriately experienced, have good occupational skills and a good understanding of workplace practice which they use to maximise learning and assessment opportunities.
15. Initial assessment is satisfactory. A comprehensive occupational skill scan cross-checks learners' duties against apprenticeship criteria and their literacy and numeracy skills. A more detailed diagnostic test is undertaken if required. Support for learners needing additional support is variable but generally satisfactory. Most are supported with extra help in the workplace by their assessors but in some cases learners are only directed to research support options by themselves.
16. ISS provides a wide range of training for staff, over and above the apprenticeship programmes. Many learners also participate in courses run at their client sites. However, there is no overall coordination and mapping of this training against their learning programme and much of it is not included in learners' individual learning plans. No one has overall responsibility for coordinating and monitoring learners' total training experience.
17. The review process is comprehensive. Feedback on key skills assignments is good, but not always sufficiently cross-referenced against NVQ evidence requirements. Target setting is satisfactory, although in a few instances it is too general.

18. The apprenticeship programmes meet the needs of employers and learners well. Employers and learners recognise a strong link between the programmes and job roles. Workplace supervisors are actively engaged in the programmes and support learners to achieve their learning aims. Where appropriate, learners are able to progress from intermediate to more advanced levels.
19. Although there is a very good relationship between ISS operational staff and assessors, communication between local ISS managers and the subcontractor is unstructured and informal.
20. Initial advice and guidance are good. Assessors and employers actively support learners to overcome barriers to achievement, and also help them deal with sensitive personal problems. Learners who have been out of formal education for some time are encouraged to progress through their programme.

Leadership and management

Grade 4

21. ISS has a very strong commitment to developing the skills of its workforce and provides good access to a wide range of training courses, including the government-funded programmes inspected. However, ISS's approach to the contract management and oversight of these programmes has been passive rather than active and ISS has added little value to the quality of programme delivery. It has not set demanding targets. It does not have formal, structured arrangements to provide full oversight and control of the qualitative and quantitative aspects of subcontractors' delivery. It has not actively practised or promoted a culture of rigorous quality assurance or continuous improvement, either in respect of its own obligations or that of its subcontractors as integral components of the programme. The quality of performance management information has been poor, including limited data which have not always been reliable.
22. ISS has recognised these issues and is currently demonstrating a strong commitment to introducing fundamental change and improvement to its quality monitoring arrangements. The new arrangements are set out in a revised contract with the single subcontractor and provide for direct and indirect monitoring of the subcontractor's performance, including observations by ISS of subcontractor assessments and reviews, unannounced visits to learner sites and securing learner and employer views. However, the contract has been under negotiation since August this year and was unsigned at the time of inspection. These arrangements have therefore had no impact.
23. The working relationship with the single subcontractor otherwise has developed reasonably well over the past three months. It includes monthly formal reporting meetings which provide a basic level of detail on learner numbers and learners' progress, and a forum for useful discussion on emerging issues. Data are supplied by the subcontractor and ISS does not have, nor has ever had, control and input of reliable learner data on its own account. ISS is actively

reviewing the internal roles and responsibilities required for its new arrangements for quality monitoring and data control.

24. Safeguarding arrangements are satisfactory and part of the whistle blowing and risk assessment processes within ISS. Guidelines are easy to understand and clearly identify the actions to take if there are any concerns. All staff working with 16- to 18-year-olds, vulnerable adults and on contracts where clients require it have enhanced CRB checks. The subcontractor fully meets government requirements, with enhanced CRB checks and training for all staff.
25. Overall, equality and diversity arrangements are satisfactory. ISS values diversity and employs staff from around 150 countries. ISS's equality and dignity at work guidelines are comprehensive and clear, covering a wide range of aspects. The guidelines underpin a concise and easy-to-understand equality of opportunity statement in the employee handbook. First and middle line managers are beginning to work towards a qualification in equality and diversity at level 2. The promotion of equality and diversity for learners by the subcontractor is good. Assessors digitally record relevant discussions, which they upload onto the e-learning system. A variance in attainment exists between learner groups. For example, men achieve at a higher rate than women, despite being a minority of learners. However, this relates primarily to a group of learners who were with a past subcontractor and ISS has since supported many of these learners to achieve their NVQ.
26. Self-assessment and quality improvement planning are inadequate. Self-assessment is not central to the quality improvement process. A self-assessment report produced in March 2011 provided an adequate evaluation of strengths and areas for improvement, including identifying significant problems with subcontractor management, quality monitoring and data. An updated report in October overstated the impact of improvement actions which are all work in progress. Each report included over-optimistic grades and neither reflected, or included, the views of any subcontractor, learners or employers.
27. Value for money is satisfactory. The achievement of most learners is good and most develop and apply new skills and knowledge well. Resources are used well. Most learners have sufficient time during working hours for assessments and reviews. Learners' and employers' views on the suitability and availability of resources are not sought.

Information about the inspection

28. Two of Her Majesty's Inspectors (HMI) and two additional inspectors, assisted by the provider's skills coordinator, as nominee, carried out the inspection. Inspectors also took account of the ISS' most recent self-assessment report, development plans and data on learners and their achievement.
29. Inspectors used group and individual interviews and emails to gain the views of learners and employers. They observed coaching and training sessions, assessments and progress reviews. Inspectors collected evidence primarily from the main programme in business administration and law offered by ISS, but also met with a small number of learners on the cleaning services apprenticeship programme. Only business administration was graded.

Record of Main Findings (RMF)

ISS UK

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	63	63
Part-time learners		
Overall effectiveness	4	4
Capacity to improve	4	
Outcomes for learners	2	2
How well do learners achieve and enjoy their learning?	2	
How well do learners attain their learning goals?	2	
How well do learners progress?	3	
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>		
<i>How well do learners make a positive contribution to the community?*</i>		
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?	3	
How effective are the care, guidance and support learners receive in helping them to achieve?	3	
Leadership and management	4	4
How effectively do leaders and managers raise expectations and promote ambition throughout the organisation?	4	
<i>How effectively do governors and supervisory bodies provide leadership, direction and challenge?*</i>	-	
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?	3	
How effectively does the provider engage with users to support and promote improvement?	4	
How effectively does self-assessment improve the quality of the provision and outcomes for learners?	4	
How efficiently and effectively does the provider use its available resources to secure value for money?	3	

*where applicable to the type of provision

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