

System Training Limited

Independent learning provider

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|--|-------------------------|----------------------|
| Inspection dates | | 17–21 September 2012 |
| Overall effectiveness | This inspection: | Good-Grade 2 |
| | Previous inspection: | Good-Grade 2 |
| Outcomes for learners | | Good-Grade 2 |
| Quality of teaching, learning and assessment | | Good-Grade 2 |
| Effectiveness of leadership and management | | Good-Grade 2 |

Summary of key findings for learners

This provider is good because:

- A high proportion of apprentices and adults on workplace courses complete their apprenticeships and National Vocational Qualifications.
- All learners make good progress from pre-apprenticeship courses to higher-level provision and employment.
- Apprentices make good progress demonstrated by their good understanding and successful application of technical skills.
- Trainers and assessors have very good specialist expertise in their occupational areas and support learners effectively to develop knowledge and skills through mostly good teaching and learning.
- The company is led and managed effectively. System Training Limited (System Training) provides apprentices with a good learning experience, especially in the workplace, and an outstanding experience at the Stobart Academy.
- Senior managers lead on a range of excellent initiatives with high-profile employers to meet the changing needs of industry and to benefit learners.

This is not yet an outstanding provider because:

- Not all learners experience good or outstanding teaching, learning and assessment.
- Support for learners is not yet sufficiently well-organised to ensure that they gain appropriate help quickly enough.
- Not all staff are fully confident in analysing management information to improve the learners'

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|--------------------------|-------------------|
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experience on the training programme.

- Too few staff are fully skilled in promoting equality and diversity to all learners.

Full report

What does the provider need to do to improve further?

- Increase the number of good and outstanding teaching, learning and assessment sessions by strengthening the arrangements for lesson observations and by accelerating staff development programmes for trainers.
- Improve the way it identifies and provides individual support to learners by collecting better-quality information on all learners on entry to programmes, and by improving staff use of the management information system so that they can quickly record and act on any support needs.
- Continue to train staff so that all are able to understand and use data effectively to improve their learners' experience.
- Improve staff skills and understanding of equality and diversity so that they have the confidence to promote these in a meaningful way with learners, both by direct training and by seeking out good practice internally and in other providers.

Inspection judgements

| Outcomes for learners | Good |
|---|------|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ The majority of apprentices and adults on workplace programmes achieve their qualifications successfully. This includes the largest area of learning, engineering, as well as information and communication technology, and business administration. Learners develop good skills which they use at work to the benefit of their employers' efficiency and profitability. Standards of work are high. A small number of learners on warehousing courses and on driving goods vehicle provision do not achieve their qualifications; however managers are taking timely actions to improve this situation. ▪ Learners across all programmes develop good teamwork skills, take on tasks that demonstrate their ability to work independently and use initiative at work and in training. Learners gain additional qualifications and receive useful extra training from their employers. Apprentices and adult workplace learners make good progress from intermediate courses to higher-level provision. A significant minority of these learners progress to higher education and to run their own businesses. ▪ Learners on employability programmes become more confident in finding and applying for jobs, and in the application of vocational skills at work. They gain crucial qualifications, funded by System Training, such as fork-lift truck, construction-site safety cards and first aid. They make good progress from their first short courses to more substantial qualifications and increasingly into employment. ▪ Learners enjoy their programmes and develop good personal attributes such as confidence and self-esteem. Employers appreciate the skills learners bring to their workplaces, not only their vocational expertise but their individual contributions and the enthusiasm they bring to their teams. ▪ Managers have narrowed the achievement gap for learners that had previously been achieving poorly on the merged provision. Current data show a significant improvement in achievement of qualifications for these learners, particularly for achievement within planned timescales. However, while managers have taken many actions to analyse data, particularly looking at the recruitment of women and people from minority ethnic communities in engineering, they do not always use systematically the statistical information to identify and | |

close the achievement gap for all vulnerable groups.

The quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Good

- Staff use a good variety of teaching and learning activities to engage and motivate learners, who respond positively to their attention. Staff challenge learners to have high expectations of their learning. Coaching and mentoring arrangements, particularly for apprentices at the Stobart Academy, are at least good and actively support learners' achievements. However, not all teaching and learning sessions are good enough for all learners.
- Trainers and assessors use their good vocational knowledge and expertise skilfully across all programmes to motivate, engage and inspire learners. Resources are good overall and give learners a high-quality experience of learning. In the Stobart Academy resources, and planning of learning to use them, are excellent. However, in one regional centre, resources, such as hand tools and cars for motor vehicle learners, are not fit for purpose. In one centre for learners on employability programmes, portable classrooms provide an unsuitable learning environment.
- Staff make good use of initial assessment for most learners. Apprentices and adults on workplace provision benefit from stringent recruitment and initial assessment processes that correctly identify vocational competencies. Individual learning plans are mostly compiled using this information. Ongoing assessment is thorough and well-planned, with good oral feedback that learners value and understand. However, reviews are not always detailed enough to record progress accurately.
- Learners benefit considerably from the detailed oral feedback they receive from tutors and assessors. They have a good understanding of what they have to do to improve and use this information to good effect with their employers to plan further training at work that extends their skills and knowledge. However, written feedback to some apprentices is not always sufficiently detailed to facilitate better planning. Employability learners' objectives are fully recorded for units of their qualification but targets to challenge their barriers to employment, like time-keeping and personal presentation, are not always sufficiently recorded.
- Apprentices with literacy or numeracy needs are supported through effective key skills sessions. Adult workplace learners are helped by their individual assessors or trainers, as are employability learners. However, the process to identify and deliver support is not always systematic and managers are not always able to calculate accurately how many learners receive support and in what time-frame.
- Staff give good information, advice and guidance to apprentices and adults on workplace training that enables them to access the appropriate course and then to progress to a range of further opportunities. Learners on pre-apprenticeship courses derive considerable benefit from the wide occupational knowledge of trainers and work placement officers to progress to higher-level courses and to be matched to suitable work placements. Information and communication technology, and business administration learners benefit from regular advice and guidance sessions that not only enable good progression through courses but also guide learners to self-employment.
- Managers took effective actions to improve recruitment and information-giving practice by halting call-centre sales-recruitment practice inherited from the merged provision. Information, advice and guidance for employability learners are given appropriately once learners settle into their preferred courses. However, not all staff have the range of skills to give good all-round advice and guidance for the variety of employability learners coming into the provision.
- Equality and diversity are adequately promoted through teaching and learning, although staff approach the issue with varying degrees of confidence and expertise across the provision. In

engineering, staff encourage learners to think about issues through thought-provoking games and activities. In information and communication technology, the trainers' approach in this area concentrates too much on repeating the law on equality and diversity rather than encouraging learners to think of real examples in their own workplaces.

- In business, administration and law, promotion of equality and diversity is good and learners demonstrate a sound understanding of a range of issues. Staff competently use monthly themed fact-sheets sent out by the central management team to explore various aspects of equality and diversity and safety with learners. In employability programmes, trainers mention equality and diversity in teaching and learning sessions but these are not fully explored. In all areas trainers are not using the review process to test learners' understanding of equality and diversity.

Motor vehicle

Apprenticeships

Other work based learning

Good

- Teaching, learning and assessment on transportation operations and maintenance are good, with a high proportion of apprentices achieving their qualifications. Teaching is well-planned, enabling learners to make good progress through theory and practical work. Trainers have a wide range of vocational experience with a variety of vehicles, including specialist goods vehicles.
- Trainers coordinate on-the-job assessments very effectively, and these give apprentices opportunities to progress. Employers are fully involved in the planning of assessments and give good support to learners to help them develop their skills. Apprentices at the Stobart Academy benefit particularly from the excellent mentoring scheme that is built into this programme.
- Staff promote health and safety very successfully, linking theory and practice seamlessly so that learners become highly safety aware. For example, in one lesson learners discussed faults on alternators, identifying various drive belts and then effectively applying their knowledge to a range of different cars. Making a good link between practice and theory, the trainer then asked them to explain the safety issues involved.
- Learners develop good independent learning skills, especially at more advanced levels. They often complete complex assignments, demonstrating good understanding of the various concepts involved. In addition, they take initiative at work by helping employers to solve problems and, in some cases, reducing costs through their innovative ideas.
- Excellent resources at the Stobart Academy, including state-of-the-art haulage truck simulator machines, give learners an outstanding experience of training and development and help them develop the confidence to take real trucks out on the road safely. Staff from System Training work full-time at the Academy and form excellent relationships with the employer. They deliver a programme of training which covers a wide range of haulage issues, with many additional qualifications, that develops very good skills and leads to guaranteed employment.
- The remaining provision across the various national sites is well-equipped and resourced, with training workshops and theory rooms having a good level of interactive whiteboards and good-quality training materials. However, in one centre there are not enough basic workshop tools for all the learners to take part in sessions and the vehicles are old and in need of upgrading.
- Assessors use a good range of assessment activities to improve learners' skills and knowledge. They visit the employers frequently to complete assessments with learners who receive accurate and fair feedback to improve further their knowledge and understanding. However, not all assessors are setting targets with their learners that are easy to measure

and monitor.

- Learners benefit from their trainers' good advice and guidance across all programmes from pre-employment provision and throughout their apprenticeships. Work-placement officers provide a very effective service in placing learners into appropriate work placements, with most learners subsequently progressing onto apprenticeships within the organisation and to higher-level courses thereafter.
- In most sessions staff give appropriate English and mathematics support. The separate delivery sessions provided are particularly effective with learners developing mathematical skills associated with engineering. However, in some sessions trainers do not take the opportunity to reinforce learners' understanding of English and mathematics further.
- Staff promote equality and diversity very effectively, with learners demonstrating a good understanding. In theory sessions, learners role-play scenarios to improve their understanding, often having enthusiastic discussions and disagreements that help them work through complex ideas. However, trainers and assessors do not use the review process effectively to reinforce equality and diversity further or use the monthly discussion sheets to develop learners' understanding.

ICT for practitioners

ICT for users

Apprenticeships

Good

- Trainers and managers have improved the quality of teaching, learning and assessment for information and communication technology learners within the past year and they are now good, with well-planned and delivered lessons resulting in outstanding levels of achievement. Trainers are knowledgeable and use their significant commercial experience to link theory to practical situations, checking that learners have a good understanding of topics such as re-programming systems or troubleshooting to resolve customer problems. Trainers use technology appropriately for teaching in lessons but it is rarely used in an innovative way.
- Staff give good support to learners. For example, one learner with significant personal problems was helped by staff to complete his programme after he lost his job, and other learners were helped to enter higher education. Learners are very positive about their trainers, finding them supportive and helpful. They give learners much informal support although this is often not fully recorded.
- A small number of sessions are too trainer-led, giving learners fewer opportunities to research and discuss topics of their own. Trainers either have, or are working towards, a teaching qualification, with the aim of all trainers eventually having a Certificate in Education qualification.
- Although most learners have high levels of English and mathematics on starting programmes, trainers still ensure that they plan appropriately to support the individual needs of learners on programme. Learners work alongside an experienced member of staff in the workplace and receive good training and support for systems development and for English and mathematics. Learners speak very positively about this relationship and the practical skills they acquire.
- Learners produce good portfolios that are very well presented, with completion of often highly complex projects. Trainers' assessments of written assignments are accurate with very clear feedback to learners on what areas are good and what they need to do to improve. In the workplace, assessments are similarly accurate but feedback to learners regarding what they need to do to improve is mostly oral and not adequately recorded.
- Trainers set learners appropriate targets in progress reviews, giving learners clear goals that motivate them highly. However, not all employers are sufficiently involved in progress

reviews and are not always aware of how well their learners are progressing. Staff and employers do not always plan learning jointly to ensure that learners can progress as quickly as possible.

- The recruitment process is very effective in ensuring learners have the right skills and aptitude for their courses, with their knowledge and prior experience of computer use being checked through individual interviews with staff. Trainers deliver induction competently, with interesting and engaging sessions that learners remember in detail. Staff place a high priority on learners' understanding of health and safety and safeguarding, particularly internet safety, although equality and diversity are covered more briefly.
- During the recruitment process staff give a good range of information about the information and communication technology industry and the apprenticeship programme to ensure learners understand the rigours of the programme from an early stage. Similarly, when learners start their training they receive further comprehensive information about the range of options open to them. At three-monthly intervals during their training programme as well as at exit, staff hold individual interviews with learners for information, advice and guidance about possible future options.
- Trainers do not always promote equality and diversity sufficiently to their learners, with staff placing too much emphasis on trying to explain legislation to learners rather than getting them to think of relevant workplace or personal issues. Staff receive monthly updates from the central management team but some are not confident in discussing all the issues with learners or of how to introduce topics into information and communication technology sessions. During progress reviews staff mention equality and diversity, but only very briefly.

Accountancy and finance

Apprenticeships

Good

- Teaching, learning and assessment are good, which is reflected in the very high number of learners who achieve their qualifications. Apprentices enjoy the good theory lessons where they make good progress and acquire skills that successfully equip them for accountancy tests and for their work tasks. Although learning resources are good overall and learners find lessons interesting and challenging, trainers make insufficient imaginative use of interactive learning technology.
- The highly effective workplace training and learning complement learners' off-the-job theory lessons. This good match enables learners to practise their newly learned skills in relevant accountancy programmes. As a result they quickly and very effectively contribute to the work of their organisations.
- Trainers give good encouragement to apprentices to work independently. Learners take responsibility for their learning in class such as checking their own work, completing additional exercises for further skills development and giving good peer support. Independent learning is again successfully promoted when learners routinely complete homework and access the online resources from the Association of Accounting Technicians website.
- Trainers are highly qualified and experienced in their sector. They draw on their excellent business administration, accountancy and book-keeping knowledge and industrial experience to set complex tasks and make accurate assessments of learning. Their good specialist expertise ensures that apprentices are fully supported in developing their knowledge and skills so that they can pass the tests, progress onto the next levels and effectively contribute to the financial work of their employers.
- Most learners have met the required levels in English and mathematics and are exempt from studying functional skills. However, trainers give good additional guidance if learners are having difficulty with their mathematical calculations in accountancy. They provide good targeted, practical support and interventions to meet learners' individual needs.

- Trainers assess learners' progress frequently and accurately, discussing assessment with learners so that they know how well they have done and what they need to do to improve. However, individual learning plans and reviews focus on the Association of Accounting Technicians qualification and set dates for completion of units. Learners' workplace training and personal development needs are not always recorded in the plans or reviews and appropriate targets are not always set or discussed in detail with employers. Goals do not have clear, measurable targets for improvement and are not always helpful to learners.
- Trainers provide good advice and guidance throughout the learning programmes, understanding the demands of the sector and being very aware of the career pathways and opportunities available. Learners are highly motivated and make the necessary connection between learning and successful progression. Learners' progression is excellent, and they are well-prepared to move on in their careers, some achieving chartered accountant qualifications or becoming partners in their own businesses.
- Managers and staff have well-established and strong links with employers, developed over a substantial period of time. These benefit learners and ensure they have a continuous progression route into, and through, the sector. Many prestigious financial firms have worked with staff to ensure that training is relevant to their sector and that learners have the high-quality skills they need to prosper.
- Good promotion of equality and diversity at induction includes health and safety as well as safeguarding. Learners demonstrate a good understanding of equality and diversity and safety, developed through monthly thematic activities with a short questionnaire to complete, for example, on winter car checks and road safety. Although trainers check carefully for any gaps in learners' understanding, reinforcement and discussion in reviews is generally insufficient and learners' understanding in relation to their work roles is not routinely checked.

The effectiveness of leadership and management

Good

- System Training leaders provide good leadership and management with a clear and well-defined vision and mission, characterised by core values central to all provision. Despite significant problems encountered after merger with a similar-sized company in 2010, leaders and managers have taken decisive action to rectify problems and maintain, and for some learners significantly improve, experiences and outcomes. Outcomes for learners from the acquired company were poor and had declined over a three-year period. In 2011/12, overall outcomes for all apprentices were above national rates and, more significantly, the percentage of learners who complete within their planned time has risen dramatically from a very low base.
- In a relatively short time, managers have completed two significant staff reorganisations to reconfigure the business better to drive improvement. Senior leaders recognised that the current management and staffing model was unsustainable. Managers realigned staff roles and responsibilities in 2009 to greatly improve communication, give better support to staff and improve the teaching and learning experience for the majority of learners.
- Managers have put into place a strong performance management process that has considerably improved staff efficiency. Staff have productive monthly meetings with their manager to review performance, and identify and action areas for improvement. The appraisal system effectively reviews performance targets identified through monthly meetings and the outcomes of quality processes such as the observation of teaching and learning.
- Staff are aware of what they have to achieve and how this links to company performance objectives. A well-defined staff-training programme effectively supports staff to improve their skills. Trainers and assessors have good occupational skills and relevant industrial

knowledge that they use effectively to build learners' knowledge and skills and focus them on their career aspirations and ambitions. Most hold, or are working towards, a relevant teaching qualification.

- Self-assessment uses learners' and employers' views, collected and thoroughly analysed from questionnaires, to inform judgements in the self-assessment report. Key quality-improvement processes have been improved to evaluate better the learner journey and impact on learners' experience at key points in the year. Quality-review and compliance-audit systems are applied simultaneously to provide a clear overview of provision and improvement needs. Managers use action plans and improvement targets precisely and in a time-bound way, frequently evaluating progress.
- Managers and staff actively promote equality and diversity to learners through monthly themed topics. Trainers receive detailed information on these topics but not all are confident in their understanding and, consequently, the quality of information learners receive varies widely. A number of training staff have been slow to complete company training in equality and diversity.
- Recruitment of female learners to the transportation and vehicle maintenance provision has increased significantly following successful campaigns by marketing staff and trainers. Staff work effectively with schools through exciting and interesting taster days to raise awareness of careers in the logistics industry. Performance data to identify underperforming groups is collected but not yet sufficiently used to set improvement targets to narrow achievement gaps.
- Staff deal promptly and effectively with the small number of incidents relating to equality and diversity. However, trainers do not always use the opportunity to target specific training for learners as a follow-up to these incidents.
- Managers and staff successfully promote health and safety and safeguarding, particularly in transportation operations. System Training meets legislative requirements for safeguarding learners. The needs of learners with specific learning difficulties and/or disabilities are met to ensure they are safe during training. However, staff do not routinely carry out formal risk assessments.
- Learners benefit significantly from excellent initiatives developed by System Training in partnership, in particular, with the logistics industry. The establishment of the Stobart Academy provides learners with an outstanding learning environment. Managers are in the planning stages of replicating this highly successful model with other prestigious national companies.
- System Training exerts a strong influence to improve national training standards that benefit the logistics industry and the learners who come into this provision. The curriculum is carefully planned to meet the diverse needs of the companies who employ apprentices. Many learners benefit from additional qualifications that enhance their vocational qualification and improve their skills and employability.

Record of Main Findings (RMF 2012)

System Training

Learning types:

19+ learning programmes leading to qualifications: FE full- and part-time courses

Apprenticeships.

| Inspection grades are based on a provider's performance: 1: Outstanding 2: Good 3: Requires improvement 4: Inadequate | Overall | Apprenticeships | Other work based learning | Employability |
|---|---------|-----------------|---------------------------|---------------|
| Overall effectiveness | 2 | 2 | 2 | 2 |
| Outcomes for learners | 2 | 2 | 2 | 2 |
| The quality of teaching, learning and assessment | 2 | 2 | 2 | 2 |
| The effectiveness of leadership and management | 2 | 2 | 2 | 2 |

| Subject areas graded for quality of teaching, learning and assessment | Grade |
|---|----------|
| Motor vehicle | 2 |
| ICT for practitioners | 2 |
| ICT for users | 2 |
| Accountancy and finance | 2 |

Provider details

| System Training | |
|---|--------------------------------------|
| Inspection dates | 17–21 September 2012 |
| Lead inspector | June Cramman HMI |
| Type of provider | Independent learning provider |
| Age range of learners | 16+ |
| Approximate number of all learners over the previous full contract year | 2,831 2010/11 |
| Principal/CEO | Robin Brown |
| Date of previous inspection | 12 October 2007 |
| Website address | www.system-training.com |

| Provider information at the time of the inspection | | | |
|--|--|----------|--------|
| Apprenticeship level | Intermediate | Advanced | Higher |
| Number of apprentices | 436 | 251 | 0 |
| Age of full-time learners | 14-16 | 16-18 | 19+ |
| Total by age | 0 | 436 | 251 |
| Number of part-time learners | 2,005 | | |
| Number of main sites | 9 | | |
| Funding received from | Skills Funding Agency (SFA) | | |
| At the time of inspection the provider contracts with the following three subcontractors: ¹ | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ ATTS ■ HTS ■ System IT | | |

Additional socio-economic information

The provider is a national company with offices from Watford to Newcastle-upon-Tyne. Unemployment rates vary considerably nationally as does pupil attainment. The main employment area in which the provider specialises is the logistics sector that operates throughout the country. Therefore a good proportion of employment is in an industry offered by System Training.

¹ The main subcontractors only

Information about this inspection

Two of Her Majesty's Inspectors (HMI) and five additional inspectors, assisted by the Head of Curriculum as nominee, carried out the inspection with short notice. Inspectors took account of the provider's most recent self-assessment report and development plans, and the previous inspection report. Inspectors also used data on learners' achievements over the last three years to help them make judgements. Inspectors used group and individual interviews, telephone calls and emails to gather the views of learners and employers. They observed learning sessions, assessments and progress reviews. These views are reflected throughout the report. The inspection took into account all of the provision at the provider. Subject inspectors looked in detail at a sample of the quality of teaching, learning and assessment in engineering, information and communication technology, and business, administration and law.

What inspection judgements mean

| Provider | | |
|----------|----------------------|--|
| Grade | Judgement | Description |
| Grade 1 | Outstanding | An outstanding provider is highly effective in delivering outcomes that provide exceptionally well for all its learners' needs. This ensures that learners are very well equipped for the next stage of their education, training or employment. |
| Grade 2 | Good | A good provider is effective in delivering outcomes that provide well for all its learners' needs. Learners are well prepared for the next stage of their education, training or employment. |
| Grade 3 | Requires improvement | A provider that requires improvement is performing less well than it might be reasonably expected in one or more of the key areas. This provider will receive a full inspection 12-18 months after the date of this inspection. |
| Grade 4 | Inadequate | A provider that is inadequate is one where the provider is failing to give its learners an acceptable standard of education and/or training and the provider's leaders, managers or governors have not demonstrated that they have the capacity to secure the necessary improvement in the provider. This provider will receive a re-inspection within 12-15 months after the date of this inspection. |

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