

L.I.T.S. Limited

Reinspection report

Unique reference number: 53069

Name of lead inspector: Richard Beaumont HMI

Last day of inspection: 9 August 2012

Type of provider: Independent learning provider

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Information about the provider

1. L.I.T.S. Limited (LITS) is based in Petts Wood, south-east London and was founded in 1981. It provides support and assessment services to engineering companies throughout the United Kingdom, with the majority of learners based in London and the South East. The majority of learners work in the lift industry. Approximately 40% of LITS' income is provided by the Skills Funding Agency for learners on advanced apprenticeship or Train to Gain programmes. All learners are aged over 16.
2. LITS currently has 161 learners on programme, of whom 107 are Train to Gain learners and 54 are apprentices. LITS employs nine assessors based around the country. The managing director is supported by a training director and four administrative staff.
3. This is a reinspection of LITS. At the previous inspection in June 2011, overall effectiveness, capacity to improve, outcomes, quality of provision, leadership and management, safeguarding and equality and diversity were all judged to be inadequate.

Type of provision	Number of enrolled learners in 2010/11
Employer provision:	
Train to Gain	26 learners
Apprenticeships	20 apprentices

Summary report

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

Overall effectiveness of provision	Grade 3
Capacity to improve	Grade 3
	Grade
Outcomes for learners	3
Quality of provision	3
Leadership and management	3
Safeguarding	3
Equality and diversity	3
Subject areas	
Engineering and manufacturing technologies	3

Overall effectiveness

4. LITS is now a satisfactory provider with satisfactory capacity to improve. Since the previous inspection when the quality of provision was judged to be inadequate, the organisation has made a range of improvements. Previously low success rates improved in 2011/12 and are now satisfactory. Learners now make at least reasonable progress in achieving their qualifications in an appropriate time and the standard of learners' work is good. The development of confidence helps learners to be even more effective in their job role.
5. The quality of on-the-job training is satisfactory. Assessment decisions relating to learners' competence are valid, but the process does not inform learners sufficiently well. The support for learners is good and arrangements to support the development of learners with additional literacy and numeracy needs are now satisfactory.
6. Leadership and management are now satisfactory. Since the previous inspection, safeguarding, the promotion of equality and diversity and the use of learners' feedback have improved to satisfactory. However, it remains unclear how senior staff effectively raise expectations and ambition throughout the organisation. The quality improvement arrangements are still not sufficiently well established.

Main findings

- The proportion of learners achieving their qualification in 2011/12 has much improved and success rates are now around the national average for similar providers. The time it took for learners to complete the qualification also improved. For Train to Gain learners, completion rates are now in line with the national average, and most of the learners currently on programme are making at least satisfactory progress. However, in 2011/12, too many apprentices made slow progress.
- All learners develop good workplace and personal skills. Many learners quickly develop levels of competence that allow them to work independently and/or to be an effective member of a team. Employers are pleased with the level of practical skills and knowledge learners develop while on programme. Some learners continue onto higher levels of learning and some gain qualified engineer status. All learners have a good understanding of health and safety requirements.
- LITS provides satisfactory on-the-job training. Learners understand how they gain their qualification but do not have sufficient access to learning materials to help them develop their knowledge beyond that relevant to their workplace.
- Assessment decisions are valid and overall assessment arrangements are satisfactory. However, LITS undertakes insufficient observation of learners' practical work and the questioning of learners' knowledge is not always sufficiently challenging. Feedback on assessment provides insufficient information for the learner and employer to judge learners' effectiveness or how they could improve further.
- Learners receive good support. Employers and assessors target their efforts effectively to ensure that learners receive plenty of constructive advice and guidance. Effective support is offered to learners in receipt of additional learning in literacy and numeracy.
- Senior managers at LITS have attended to improving the recommendations from the previous inspection but do not have sufficient focus on developing the provision further. Learners' progress is appropriately monitored. However, staff roles are not sufficiently focused on developing and coordinating training.
- Safeguarding arrangements have been much improved since the previous inspection and are now satisfactory and meet current legal requirements. Staff have been trained appropriately and learners have a good understanding of health and safety. They work in well-maintained workplace environments.
- The promotion of equality of diversity is satisfactory. Recently introduced self-study guide books and discussions with assessors at progress reviews maintain and improve learners' knowledge. The collection and analysis of data on the performance of different learner groups are satisfactory, although not always sufficiently clear.
- LITS has an appropriate understanding of the quality of the provision and, since the previous inspection, has effectively improved aspects of the provision. However, quality improvement arrangements are not sufficiently well

established to ensure that all learners receive a similar and effective training experience.

What does LITS need to do to improve further?

- Develop and introduce excellent learning resources for all learners in order to improve greatly their understanding and knowledge of the industry beyond that of their job role.
- In association with employers, introduce individual learning plans that clearly map a learner's training needs so that they can achieve all qualifications effectively and in good time.
- Ensure that all employers are actively involved in the regular setting of challenging progress targets for learners and that they are involved fully in the monitoring of those targets to ensure that learners meet them in a timely manner.
- Significantly improve the quality and consistency of the assessment process through much greater rigour in the use of verbal questioning, evaluative written feedback from assessors on learner competence and even greater use of the observation of learners' practical competence by assessors.
- Introduce clear and challenging targets for all aspects of the provision to drive forward standards in the organisation.
- Further develop and fully implement quality improvement arrangements that clearly and robustly monitor all aspects of the learners' experience and develop provision to a very high standard.

Summary of the views of users as confirmed by inspectors

What learners like:

- opportunities to gain a wide range of skills
- the support they receive from assessors and employers
- gaining additional qualifications
- being treated like an adult and given responsibility
- the subject knowledge of LITS assessors.

What learners would like to see improved:

- the clarity of their targets and guidance on progress review documents
- a reduction in the currently excessive amount of written evidence required for their portfolios.

Summary of the views of employers as confirmed by inspectors

What employers like:

- the professional approach and support from assessors
- the high level of industry knowledge and experience of assessors
- the verbal feedback from some assessors on learners' performance and attendance at college.

What employers would like to see improved:

- communication and information from LITS management
- the speed with which LITS managers respond to phone calls and concerns raised regarding learners
- the recording of learner reviews and greater clarity of guidance and progress targets.

Main inspection report

Capacity to make and sustain improvement

Grade 3

7. LITS has made reasonable progress in attending to the previous inspection recommendations. Some of the recommendations have been fully met and others have generally been developed to an overall satisfactory standard. In 2011/12, success and completion rates have much improved from a low baseline and are now around the national average for similar providers. The monitoring of learners' progress has improved and LITS has a greater understanding of why some learners' progress is too slow.
8. The latest self-assessment is an improvement on the previous one and is broadly accurate. It is more realistic and evaluative and most grades match those of this inspection. The introduction of a quality cycle to monitor aspects of the provision has started to improve LITS' understanding of the quality of its provision and how to improve the self-assessment process further. However, quality improvement arrangements are not yet sufficiently well established.

Outcomes for learners

Grade 3

9. Apprenticeship success rates are high and have much improved in 2011/12 from rates that were previously low and declining. Apprenticeship completion rates within the agreed time have much improved in 2011/12, although too many learners made slow progress. Train to Gain success rates are now satisfactory and improved well in 2011/12. They are now equal to those of the 2010/11 national average for similar providers. Completion rates within the agreed time for Train to Gain learners improved considerably in 2011/12 and are now satisfactory. All learner groups perform similarly. The 2011/12 data judgements are based upon LITS' own data records.
10. Learners develop good personal and workplace skills. Their confidence levels improve significantly. Many learners with little or no previous work experience quickly progress to a high level of competence. They work on complex tasks with minimum supervision using a wide range of specialist tools and equipment to produce work of a good standard. All learners feel safe and have a good understanding of safe working practices.
11. Learners who achieve effectively make good improvements in their economic and social well-being. Most employers retain their apprentices upon completion of their training and some progress to foundation degrees and higher education programmes. Most learners progress well and many gain additional vocational qualifications. Some Train to Gain learners advance from assistant to qualified engineer status and many improve their employment terms and conditions as a result.

The quality of provision

Grade 3

12. Employer based training is satisfactory and learners have a clear understanding of the programme and evidence requirements. Learners receive effective individual coaching and training from experienced mentors, workplace supervisors and assessors. Some employers offer structured training programmes in all areas of the employer's business, for example, in production workshops, industrial services and the drawing office. However, these are not linked to the qualifications. The use of learning resources to support learners' appreciation of the industry beyond that of their work role is under-developed.
13. Overall, the assessment of learners' competence is satisfactory. Since the previous inspection, the frequency of direct workplace observations has improved and assessment decisions are valid. Portfolios are well documented and learners are increasingly using alternative ways of presenting evidence such as digital photographs, charts, job cards and workplace documents. However, there is too much variation in assessment practice. For example, the quality of assessment feedback is not always sufficiently clear to help learners understand fully their level of competence, and the use of oral questioning to demonstrate detailed knowledge is not sufficiently challenging or well recorded.
14. LITS meets the needs of learners and employers appropriately. Optional and additional NVQ units are made readily available to recognise and extend learners' skills in line with their work role. The planning of learners' time on programme does not take sufficient account of learners' individual circumstances. Partnership arrangements with employers and advice and guidance to learners are satisfactory.
15. Care, guidance and support are good. High levels of individual support from peers, workplace assessors and, for some learners, work-based mentors, motivate learners particularly well. Assessors offer good coaching and use their industry knowledge effectively to support learners and to plan their frequent visits carefully. Since the previous inspection, initial assessment and additional learning support arrangements are much improved. All learners are now tested at the start of the programme in literacy, numeracy and for dyslexia. Learners in receipt of additional support for literacy and numeracy improve their skills well and in good time.

Leadership and management

Grade 3

16. Since the previous inspection, LITS has employed external consultants to support its response to the recommendations made at the previous inspection, and given the relatively short period of time, actions to improve have generally been effective in raising standards to a satisfactory level. Learner achievements are now closely monitored and some staff roles developed to improve the effectiveness of aspects of the provision. Senior management have a clear view of the improvements made to date but they recognise that overall, change has been too slow and the setting of performance targets under-developed. The

coordination of training by LITS and the sharing of best practice with employers is insufficiently well developed.

17. At the previous inspection, safeguarding was judged to be inadequate. Since then, arrangements have much improved and are now satisfactory. Relevant staff have now been checked by the Criminal Records Bureau and all staff have received safeguarding training. LITS has developed and introduced appropriate resources to reinforce learners' knowledge through self-study guides and questioning at progress reviews. All learners have a clear understanding of safeguarding arrangements and health and safety at work. Employers have well-maintained workshops that promote safe learning environments, and LITS completes annual compliance checks.
18. The promotion of equality and diversity is now satisfactory. All staff have received appropriate training and feel confident in supporting learners through the recently introduced equality and diversity self-study guide and in managing specific topics for discussion at progress reviews. Initially, much of the discussion focused on bullying but this has recently been extended to include a broader range of equality and diversity topics. However, the recording of the discussions at reviews is not sufficiently clear to show the level of learners' knowledge. Learners have a clear understanding of their rights and responsibilities and of the appeals process. Overall, the analysis of data to monitor trends in learner group performance is satisfactory. However, the analysis of some comparative data is not always sufficiently rigorous. For example, data on the average length of time that learners are on their programme do not distinguish between different programmes.
19. The collection and use of learners' and employers' feedback to improve the provision are now satisfactory. LITS has introduced more formal procedures and although responses are low, negative comments are quickly and effectively attended to.
20. Following the previous inspection, LITS has introduced a quality cycle and now internally audits assessors' paperwork. However, despite some aspects of provision being improved, overall, quality improvement arrangements are still not fully established or well developed. For example, the quality improvement plan targets are not always sufficiently clear as to what success should look like and actions are not always followed up. The quality cycle does not include all aspects of the learner's experience. The auditing of paperwork does not always lead to improving the impact of the process under review. Internal verification is weak. For example, there is insufficient formative sampling of learners' portfolios and the direct observation of a learner's competence at work.
21. Value for money is satisfactory. Learners develop a good range of skills and sufficient numbers of learners now achieve their qualifications. Assessors visit learners regularly and use their industry knowledge well to support learners effectively.

Information about the inspection

22. One of Her Majesty's Inspectors (HMI) and two additional inspectors, assisted by the provider's Training Director, as nominee, carried out the inspection. Inspectors also took account of the provider's most recent self-assessment report and development plans, 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.
23. 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 assessments and progress reviews. Inspectors collected evidence from programmes in each of the subject areas the provider offers.

Record of Main Findings (RMF)**L.I.T.S. 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	161	161
Part-time learners		
Overall effectiveness	3	3
Capacity to improve	3	

Outcomes for learners	3	3
How well do learners achieve and enjoy their learning?	3	
How well do learners attain their learning goals?	3	
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?	3	
<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	3	3
How effectively do teaching, training and assessment support learning and development?	3	
How effectively does the provision meet the needs and interests of users?	3	
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?	2	
Leadership and management	3	3
How effectively do leaders and managers raise expectations and promote ambition throughout the organisation?	3	
<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?	3	
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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