

Independent Training Services Ltd

Independent learning provider

Inspection dates		25 February – 1 March 2013
Overall effectiveness	This inspection:	Requires improvement-3
	Previous inspection:	Good-2
Outcomes for learners		Requires improvement-3
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment		Requires improvement-3
Effectiveness of leadership and management		Requires improvement-3

Summary of key findings for learners

This provider requires improvement because:

- Apprenticeship success rates are broadly the same as national averages but vary too much between subject areas.
- Although improving, the progression of foundation learners into employment, education and training remains too low.
- Teaching, learning and assessment are too variable and the process for observing teaching and learning does not lead to a consistently high-quality in all subjects.
- Information, advice and guidance are not of a consistently high quality across all subjects and subcontractors.
- The monitoring and quality assurance of subcontractors has not resulted in consistently high-quality of provision.
- Managers do not make good use of the large amount of data to monitor and improve the provision.

This provider has the following strengths:

- Good development of apprentices' vocational skills.
- Good achievement of functional skills qualifications by foundation learners.
- Good support for learners with additional learning and/or social needs.
- Broad range of vocational routes for foundation learners.
- High-quality accommodation and learning resources at Independent Training Services Ltd (ITS).
- Rapid actions by new senior managers to identify and address areas for improvement.

Full report

What does the provider need to do to improve further?

- Focus teaching and learning observations on learners and what they are learning and ensure that the observation process successfully improves teaching, learning and assessment through the identification and sharing of good practice.
- Ensure written feedback following assessment fully reflects the detailed oral feedback given to aid learners' progress.
- Improve apprenticeship success rates by regularly monitoring the progress of all learners, including those who are subcontracted to other training providers, and ensure that slow progress is rapidly reversed.
- Improve Foundation Learning progression to employment, education or training by providing high-quality information, advice and guidance during the programme and ensuring all learners have appropriate periods of work experience.
- Improve the self-assessment process so that it is fully inclusive of stakeholder views and that the report accurately identifies strengths and aspects that require improvement.
- Improve the analysis and use of data for managing, monitoring and quality improving the provision.
- Provide the board with sufficient and timely information to enable the trustees to support and rigorously challenge the senior management.

Inspection judgements

Outcomes for learners	Requires improvement
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ The outcomes for learners require improvement and are reflected in the quality of teaching, learning and assessment and the effectiveness of leadership and management which also require improvement. ▪ The proportion of apprentices who successfully complete their apprenticeships is broadly in line with national averages while the proportion of those who achieve within their planned timescales is good and considerably above national averages. However, there is too much variation between the different subjects. Learners on retailing and wholesaling apprenticeships and those on health and social care apprenticeships have good success rates while on business-related apprenticeships success rates declined significantly in 2011/12 from good to considerably below national averages. ▪ There are no particular variations in the performance of different apprenticeship groups other than for those learners with declared learning difficulties and/or disabilities. These learners perform better than their peers and better than the national averages for similar groups. However, there is too much variation in apprenticeship success rates across the subcontractors which range from outstanding to unsatisfactory. ▪ On Foundation Learning, the achievement of functional skills is good and well-above national averages. The achievement of vocational qualifications broadly matches the national averages for similar providers. Progression rates into employment, education and training have been low and while improving over a three-year period, are still only satisfactory in the current year. However, for those learners who do progress, a large majority move into employment with training. ▪ In-year retention rates have improved for both apprenticeship and foundation learners against the same period of last year and are now good for most subcontractors. Any attendance issues are identified and addressed weekly for individual learners. 	

- ITS does not collate aggregated attendance information to make group comparisons or trend analysis possible. ITS also recognises the need to analyse available data more rigorously to identify better any differences in learners' performance and reasons for leaving the training programme early leaving to inform intervention strategies.
- Current apprentices are generally making reasonable progress towards completing their qualifications. In business, learners develop valuable workplace knowledge such as the importance of planning work and developing ethical working relationships with customers. In retailing and wholesaling they are involved in projects such as waste management which provide them with good opportunities to develop their skills and contribute to increased business efficiency.
- Foundation learners are developing good skills in team working and exhibit good improvements in communication, self-motivation and self-confidence. In the Foundation Learning sessions observed, learners were clearly enjoying their learning and participating fully in the activities.
- Progression between intermediate and advanced apprenticeships is good in motor vehicle but, while improving in the other subjects, is still generally low.

The quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Requires improvement

- The quality of teaching, learning and assessment requires improvement which is reflected in outcomes for learners which also require improvement.
- In the better training and coaching sessions, good preparation and innovative, enthusiastic delivery by assessors result in effective learning and the development of good work-related knowledge and skills. Learners enjoy their training sessions. They work collaboratively and participate in a good range of learning activities. The standard of learners' work is at least satisfactory and often better. In retailing and wholesaling, for example, learners' work is of a high standard and a good range of evidence is presented in their portfolios.
- In the weaker training and coaching sessions, insufficient checking of learners' understanding results in missed opportunities to extend learning. Learning is not sufficiently personalised and linked to learners' preferred learning styles. Inconsistencies in the quality of training between ITS and subcontractors impacts on learners' ongoing progress and successful completion of their programmes. Foundation learners have too few opportunities for work shadowing and work experience on employers' premises.
- Trainers and assessors are appropriately qualified and have relevant occupational experience which they use effectively in the delivery of coaching and training. They benefit from a wide range of professional development opportunities.
- Additional learning needs, such as dyslexia, are accurately identified. The majority of learners benefit from good support from trainers who liaise closely with employers to encourage learners to stay on their programmes. However, inconsistencies in the tracking and monitoring of support in individual learning plans and reviews result in ITS being unable to measure the full impact of the support provided.
- The recording of individual learning needs and progress is inconsistent. Considerable variations between ITS and subcontractors are apparent, for example in the detail recorded in individual learning plans and reviews, and the variability in target-setting. Some individual learning plans and reviews are insufficiently comprehensive and do not focus on the specific training and learning that are required. New processes have recently been introduced to standardise the use of documentation across all provision but it is too soon to measure their impact.
- Initial assessment is effective. All learners undertake appropriate initial and diagnostic assessment at the start of their programme. In Foundation Learning, initial assessment is comprehensive and in business it effectively identifies a range of personal and learning needs.
- Assessors visit learners regularly in the workplace resulting in frequent coaching and assessment opportunities. Assessment of learners' work is generally good. They receive adequate oral feedback following assessment. Although written feedback is overwhelmingly

positive, it does always not provide learners with sufficient feedback on what they need to do to improve. Spelling, punctuation and grammatical errors are not routinely corrected.

- Overall, learners are satisfactorily supported to help them achieve their functional skills qualifications. However, there is variation in how functional skills are taught, with some being closely related to vocational programmes while others are too general and not taught within a vocational context. For some learners in business, functional skills support is provided too late in their programme.
- The quality and relevance of information, advice and guidance are too variable. The help given to learners on retailing and wholesaling programmes to enable them to plan their careers is good. However, other learners, such as those on Foundation Learning programmes, have insufficient information and guidance to enable them make considered decisions about their next steps.
- Learners generally have a basic knowledge and understanding of equality and diversity. The promotion and discussion of equality and diversity in some lessons and progress reviews lack depth and challenge, and learners' knowledge and understanding are not continually extended. However, retailing and wholesaling learners have a good understanding of equality and diversity which they can relate to their employment.

Retailing and wholesaling

Good

Apprenticeships

- The quality of teaching, learning and assessment is good and this is reflected in the good success rates. Assessors are suitably qualified and have a very good understanding of the main organisation in which learners are employed.
- Learning sessions are thoroughly planned and designed to meet learners' individual needs. They are particularly successful in helping learners to develop a wide range of work-related skills relevant to their retail employment. Specific projects are designed to focus learners on important in-store issues, such as waste management, and the careful selection of units for their National Vocational Qualification (NVQ) ensures that their skills increase.
- Individual learning plans, which are fully updated at each review, effectively record learners' targets and their progress towards meeting them. Learners' progress is monitored regularly to ensure they achieve within the planned time. Documentation to record learners' achievement and progress has been modified and is now more robust. However, it is too early to judge its effectiveness.
- Learners appreciate the good support provided by assessors, which motivates them and enables them to become valued members of staff. Support is flexible and specifically targeted. Learners are visited at least monthly in the workplace with evidence being submitted and assessed between visits to ensure learning occurs and progress is maintained.
- The standard of learners' work is high and a good range of evidence is presented in their portfolios. Regular assessment of the evidence shows that learners have a sound grasp of their work. Comprehensive feedback from assessors allows any gaps in learners' knowledge to be identified. Learners understand what they need to do to improve.
- Progress reviews are detailed and employers give their views to assist learners' development further. Relevant targets are set at reviews and are followed up at subsequent assessment visits. Reviews are particularly successful in providing learners with clear guidance about the skills they still need to develop.
- Learners have very good opportunities for improving their English and mathematics competencies and to prepare for functional skills tests. Where additional tuition is required, specialist tutors provide focused sessions either on employers' premises or at ITS. Tasks are relevant to the workplace and assist learners' understanding, helping them to become more knowledgeable and confident. For example, one learner received particularly good tutoring in

number skills which allowed her to become more confident at work and to help her daughter with school work.

- Good use is made of initial assessment for planning learning and meeting learners' individual needs. Learners work effectively on their own initiative and challenging targets help them to focus on what is expected between assessors' visits. Learners make at least satisfactory progress towards achieving their qualification.
- Assessors give good information, advice and guidance to learners to help them plan their careers. Learners are encouraged to progress to higher-level qualifications and they receive appropriate support to develop their job roles where appropriate.
- Learners' knowledge of equality and diversity is good. They benefit considerably from in-house training by their employers which provides them with a wealth of information and resources that they use as evidence towards their NVQ. They have a good understanding of how equality and diversity relate to their work in the stores.

Foundation Learning

Requires improvement

Foundation Learning

- The quality of teaching, learning and assessment requires improvement and this is reflected in the low numbers of learners successfully progressing in the past three years. While progression and retention show an upward trend they still require improvement.
- In many learning sessions, learners' interest is maintained through suitably paced and varied learning activities to develop skills such as speaking and listening, and sound-effect recording in creative media courses. Some learners benefit from highly skilled, enthusiastic tutors who use good questioning techniques and assessment methods to reinforce and summarise learning. There are variations in the quality of subcontracted provision.
- A good range of resources develop learners' skills. Subcontractors also provide a good variety of vocational options and specialist resources. Tutors use resources creatively in lessons, ensuring maximum participation by learners. Practical poster-making activities and quizzes demonstrate learners' knowledge of different subjects in personal and social development courses and specialist recording software allows learners to record their own sound effects for producing a radio jingle.
- Initial assessment is comprehensive. A range of standardised assessment methods is used effectively to identify learners' starting points for functional skills. All learners complete further diagnostic assessments which are used to plan challenging learning programmes.
- The use of individual learning plans is inconsistent. While some tutors use progress reviews very effectively to monitor progress and motivate learners others do not. Where progress monitoring is fragmented, it is not possible to obtain an accurate overview of learners' progress. Reviews do not consistently set short-term targets that are sufficiently demanding.
- Comprehensive assessment of learners' work ensures that most learners are fully informed about the progress they are making. Learners receive detailed and encouraging written feedback on their work in English, mathematics, and personal and social development. In practical sessions oral feedback clearly identifies what learners need to do to improve or to develop their skills, for example how to ensure safe practices within a stable yard.
- Learners with additional learning needs receive good support. They are screened for indicators of dyslexia and are referred for formal assessment when appropriate. Staff have a good knowledge of learners' needs and provide a range of resources, including coloured overlays, to support learning. Subcontractors do not always plan learning effectively to meet learners' additional learning needs.
- Overall, the arrangements to develop functional skills are good. In the best sessions activities are effectively matched to individual needs and tutors use resources creatively to support

learning and make English and mathematics fun and relevant to learners. For example, motor vehicle learners thoroughly enjoyed calculating the cost of servicing a vehicle because they understood the relevance of the activity.

- Information, advice and guidance about progression opportunities are ineffective and fail to ensure that all learners have the knowledge and understanding to make informed decisions about their next steps. Insufficient availability and use of work placements also limit progression into employment, apprenticeships or further training.
- Learners are good at working together and showing respect and understanding for each other and their tutors. Staff understand the needs of learners from diverse and often very disadvantaged backgrounds. Equality and diversity are usually promoted satisfactorily. However, in some lessons and progress reviews opportunities for increasing learners' knowledge and understanding are neglected.

Business

Requires improvement

Apprenticeships

- The quality of teaching, learning and assessment requires improvement. Too few apprentices complete their frameworks. Learners who are subcontracted to other training providers are less successful than those in ITS.
- In the better training sessions, staff provide learners with personalised, intensive coaching and support which complement their workplace training. Assessors make good use of questioning to challenge and encourage learners and to promote analytical and reflective thinking.
- In the less effective sessions, planning is insufficiently detailed and learning is not matched with learners' preferred learning styles. Technology is underused in teaching and assessment. In some training sessions there is an over-reliance on worksheets.
- Assessment is carefully planned and feedback is detailed. Some learners do not yet have access to online assessment technology and resources although these are currently being introduced. Most learners are clear about what is expected of them and they make adequate progress towards their targets. The standard of learners' work is at least satisfactory and meets awarding body requirements.
- The support and care provided by assessors are very effective and appreciated by learners. Assessors are well-qualified and have good experience in the specialist areas they teach. They visit workplaces frequently and develop good relationships with employers. Most employers provide training courses and experienced mentors to support learners.
- Initial assessment is appropriate and covers a range of personal and learning skills. The use of individual learning plans is inconsistent. Some staff make good use of them to agree clear and challenging targets. However, many focus insufficiently on workplace training and the development of personal skills. Learners' individual learning programmes are coordinated appropriately although in some cases technical certificate training is delayed.
- Most learners are on relevant programmes at the correct level. Some ITS learners attend an employability programme which prepares them very effectively for apprenticeship programmes. However, in some subcontractors there is mismatch between learners and workplaces.
- The support learners receive to meet their functional skills needs is good where specialist tutors work with learners. Opportunities are not always taken to link functional skills learning with vocational coaching. For some learners the functional skills support is too late in their programme.
- Tutors assess learners' work regularly and accurately and provide clear feedback that informs them of their progress and what they need to do to improve. Learners' reviews are regular with some effective input from employers. However, there is a strong focus on completing qualifications and too few personal development targets are set.
- Information, advice and guidance are inadequate. Most learners have a good understanding of their learning programme but receive insufficient helpful information from assessors about

progression routes. Progression from intermediate to advanced apprenticeships has improved but remains low.

- Learners have a basic awareness of equality and diversity. They are able to recall key aspects of legislation and understand the importance of respecting diversity. Although assessors routinely check learners' understanding at progress reviews, the discussions sometimes lack challenge. Some assessors miss opportunities during the coaching sessions to promote equality and diversity.

The effectiveness of leadership and management

Requires improvement

- Leadership and management require improvement. This is reflected in outcomes for learners and the quality of teaching and learning which also require improvement.
- The company has been through a period of significant upheaval as a result of staffing difficulties, including the loss of two members of the senior management team. During this time, the company did not have a clear strategic direction and operational difficulties arose. However, most learners were unaware of the organisation's difficulties.
- Since the appointment of the new operations director, rapid progress has been made in implementing a range of initiatives to improve the company. The organisational structure has been modified, leading to revised work role responsibilities and clear lines of accountability for staff. Staff are very positive about the way change is being managed and about the beneficial impact it is having on their day-to-day work and on their morale. A new chief executive officer commenced employment at ITS on the first day of the inspection.
- The annual appraisal process has recently been strengthened through the addition of monthly one-to-one meetings between assessors and their line managers. Much greater emphasis is now placed on regularly evaluating assessors' effectiveness against key-performance indicators, including learner starts, progress and success rates. Although it is too soon to judge the full impact of this development, early indicators suggest that learner retention is improving.
- The progress of learners who are subcontracted to other training providers has been inadequately monitored. This has adversely affected learners' retention and their completion within pre-defined timescales. The company has acknowledged this failing and recent action has been taken to ensure that the progress of all learners in subcontracted provision is monitored monthly with the intention of improving retention and successful completion.
- The quality of subcontractors' provision is systematically evaluated and detailed reports are produced. Insufficient importance is placed on the need for subcontractors to action plan and address all identified weaknesses. There is still considerable variability in the quality of subcontracted provision and a recent sound managerial decision has been taken to terminate underperforming subcontractors.
- The observation of teaching and learning places too little emphasis on what learners are learning. The reports vary in quality and usefulness. The self-assessment process is not fully inclusive and while the self-assessment report is analytical, in view of the recent developments, it is now out of date. The operations director has been quick to identify, prioritise and begin working on key areas for improvement although these are not fully reflected in the quality improvement plan.
- The range of provision includes a good range of occupational sectors. It is currently being reviewed and rationalised, resulting in the withdrawal of some vocational areas and the addition of others. Good use is being made of local labour market information to determine relevant occupational areas for Foundation Learning and apprenticeship programmes. As the provider recognises, it has no higher-level courses. Relationships with employers are very strong and of considerable benefit to learners although there are too few work placements for Foundation learners.
- Good investment has been made in high-quality accommodation and learning resources. The refurbished learning centre provides a very good environment for learners and it is accessible to

those with mobility difficulties. The installation of solar panels has significantly reduced the company's carbon footprint. A range of technological learning resources, including smartboards and laptop computers, is available although their use is not fully exploited to promote learning.

- Data are insufficiently used to manage, monitor and quality improve the provision. A lot of data is collected but it is not effectively used, for example for forecasting, driving improvements and tracking learners' destinations, as the provider acknowledges. A data strategy has been agreed and it is predicted that the new management information system will be fully functional, and that staff will be trained to use it, within the next four months.
- The board has received insufficiently detailed and accurate information to enable the trustees to challenge senior managers rigorously and hold them to account. Although the board has recently been strengthened, there are still unfilled vacancies and considerable potential for complementing the existing expertise.
- Equality and diversity policies and procedures are satisfactorily implemented. Training in equality and diversity for staff is adequate. Learners have good opportunities to give their views on the quality and relevance of the provision.
- Arrangements for safeguarding learners meet the statutory requirements. The required safeguarding arrangements are rigorously implemented and regularly reviewed. Managers, assessors and trustees are appropriately trained and safeguarding has a high priority. Prompt action is taken to deal with any bullying, harassment and unfair treatment.

Record of Main Findings (RMF)

Independent Training Services Ltd			
<p>Inspection grades are based on a provider's performance:</p> <p>1: Outstanding 2: Good 3: Requires improvement 4: Inadequate</p>	Overall	Apprenticeships	Foundation Learning
Overall effectiveness	3	3	3
Outcomes for learners	3	3	3
The quality of teaching, learning and assessment	3	3	3
The effectiveness of leadership and management	3	3	3

Subject areas graded for the quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Grade
Retailing and wholesaling	2
Foundation learning	3
Business	3

Provider details

Independent Training Services Ltd	
Type of provider	Independent learning provider
Age range of learners	16-18 and 19+
Approximate number of all learners over the previous full contract year	Full-time: 343
	Part-time: 910
Principal/CEO	Chris Payne
Date of previous inspection	July 2011
Website address	www.ind-training.co.uk

Provider information at the time of the inspection								
Main course or learning programme level	Level 1 or below		Level 2		Level 3		Level 4 and above	
Total number of learners (excluding apprenticeships)	16-18	19+	16-18	19+	16-18	19+	16-18	19+
Full-time	158	1	32	1	0	0	0	0
Part-time	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Number of apprentices by Apprenticeship level and age	Intermediate		Advanced		Higher			
	16-18	19+	16-18	19+	16-18	19+		
	127	86	53	139	0	0		
Number of learners aged 14-16	n/a							
Number of community learners	n/a							
Number of employability learners	n/a							
Funding received from	Education Funding Agency and Skills Funding Agency							
At the time of inspection the provider contracts with the following main subcontractors:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Barnsley Community Build ■ Barnsley FC Community Sports + Education Trust ■ Best Choice Training ■ Horizon ■ Leslie Francis ■ Lynx Training and Development ■ Optimas Training ■ Riding for Disabled ■ Talent Training ■ Team You 							

Additional socio-economic information

Independent Training Services Limited (ITS) is a registered charity and company limited by guarantee founded in 1981 and located in Barnsley. The company is governed by a board of trustees and employs 61 staff. Government funding represents approximately 98% of its annual income.

Barnsley has a population of approximately 230,000. The percentage of school pupils achieving five GCSEs at grades A* to C, including English and mathematics, is well below the regional and national averages for England. The proportion of adults in Barnsley who hold no formal qualifications is substantially higher than the average for England. The worklessness rate is high compared with regional and national averages.

Information about this inspection

Lead inspector	Mike White HMI
-----------------------	----------------

One of Her Majesty's Inspectors (HMI) and seven additional inspectors, assisted by the operations director 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 online questionnaires to collect the views of learners and employers; these views are reflected throughout the report. They observed learning sessions, assessments and progress reviews. The inspection took into account all of the provision at the provider. Inspectors looked at the quality of teaching, learning and assessment across all of the provision and graded the subject areas listed in the report above.

What inspection judgements mean

Grade	Judgement
Grade 1	Outstanding
Grade 2	Good
Grade 3	Requires improvement
Grade 4	Inadequate

Detailed grade characteristics can be viewed in the *Handbook for the inspection of further education and skills 2012*, Part 2:

<http://www.ofsted.gov.uk/resources/handbook-for-inspection-of-further-education-and-skills-september-2012>

Any complaints about the inspection or the report should be made following the procedures set out in the guidance 'Raising concerns and making complaints about Ofsted', which is available from Ofsted's website: www.ofsted.gov.uk If you would like Ofsted to send you a copy of the guidance, please telephone 0300 123 4234, or email enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk.



Learner View is a new website where learners can tell Ofsted what they think about their college or provider. They can also see what other learners think about them too.

To find out more go to www.learnerview.ofsted.gov.uk or if you have any questions about Learner View please email Ofsted at: learnerview@ofsted.gov.uk

The Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (Ofsted) regulates and inspects to achieve excellence in the care of children and young people, and in education and skills for learners of all ages. It regulates and inspects childcare and children's social care, and inspects the Children and Family Court Advisory Support Service (Cafcass), schools, colleges, initial teacher training, work-based learning and skills training, community learning, and education and training in prisons and other secure establishments. It assesses council children's services, and inspects services for looked after children, safeguarding and child protection.

If you would like a copy of this document in a different format, such as large print or Braille, please telephone 0300 123 4234, or email enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk.

You may copy all or parts of this document for non-commercial educational purposes, as long as you give details of the source and date of publication and do not alter the information in any way.

To receive regular email alerts about new publications, including survey reports and provider inspection reports, please visit our website and go to 'Subscribe'.

[Piccadilly Gate](#)
[Store Street](#)
[Manchester](#)
[M1 2WD](#)

T: 0300 123 4234

Textphone: 0161 618 8524

E: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk

W: www.ofsted.gov.uk

© Crown copyright 2013