

INSPECTION REPORT

Clarkson Evans Limited

29 July 2002



ADULT LEARNING
INSPECTORATE

Grading

Inspectors use a seven-point scale to summarise their judgements about the quality of learning sessions. The descriptors for the seven grades are:

- *grade 1 - excellent*
- *grade 2 - very good*
- *grade 3 - good*
- *grade 4 - satisfactory*
- *grade 5 - unsatisfactory*
- *grade 6 - poor*
- *grade 7 - very poor.*

Inspectors use a five-point scale to summarise their judgements about the quality of provision in occupational/curriculum areas and Jobcentre Plus programmes. The same scale is used to describe the quality of leadership and management, which includes quality assurance and equality of opportunity. The descriptors for the five grades are:

- *grade 1 - outstanding*
- *grade 2 - good*
- *grade 3 - satisfactory*
- *grade 4 - unsatisfactory*
- *grade 5 - very weak.*

The two grading scales relate to each other as follows:

SEVEN-POINT SCALE	FIVE-POINT SCALE
grade 1	grade 1
grade 2	
grade 3	grade 2
grade 4	grade 3
grade 5	grade 4
grade 6	grade 5
grade 7	

Adult Learning Inspectorate

The Adult Learning Inspectorate (ALI) was established under the provisions of the *Learning and Skills Act 2000* to bring the inspection of all aspects of adult learning and work-based training within the remit of a single inspectorate. The ALI is responsible for inspecting a wide range of government-funded learning, including:

- work-based training for all people over 16
- provision in further education colleges for people aged 19 and over
- **learndirect** provision
- adult and community learning
- training funded by Jobcentre Plus
- education and training in prisons, at the invitation of her majesty's Chief Inspector of Prisons.

Inspections are carried out in accordance with the *Common Inspection Framework* by teams of full-time inspectors and part-time associate inspectors who have knowledge of, and experience in, the work which they inspect. All providers are invited to nominate a senior member of their staff to participate in the inspection as a team member.

Inadequate provision

A provider's provision will normally be deemed to be less than adequate where

- one third or more of published grades for occupational/curriculum areas and Jobcentre Plus programmes are judged less than satisfactory, or
- leadership and management are judged to be less than satisfactory

The final decision as to whether the provision is inadequate rests with the Chief Inspector of Adult Learning. The overall judgement as to whether the provision is adequate or inadequate is included in the summary section of the inspection report.

SUMMARY

The provider

Clarkson Evans Limited's main business is electrical installation for new buildings. Its head office and training centre are based in Gloucester and it has a depot in Newport. It provides work-based learning for young people in electrical installation.

Overall judgement

The quality of the provision is adequate to meet the reasonable needs of those receiving it. Training in construction is satisfactory. The leadership and management of Clarkson Evans Limited are also satisfactory.

GRADES

Leadership and management	3
Contributory grades:	
Equality of opportunity	3
Quality assurance	3

Construction	3
Contributory grades:	
Work-based learning for young people	3

KEY STRENGTHS

- good quality of learners' work
- good assessment
- particularly good accommodation and resources
- good work placements
- good strategy for training
- successful recruitment of learners from minority ethnic groups
- good internal communications
- good staff development

KEY WEAKNESSES

- slow progress towards key skills awards
- no planned on-the-job training
- inadequate management information system
- insufficient reinforcement of equality of opportunity during training
- insufficient focus on targets for training

OTHER IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED

- more involvement of training staff in producing the business plan
- further development of procedures to assure quality
- insufficient involvement of workplace supervisors in planning training and reviewing learners' progress

THE INSPECTION

1. Three inspectors spent a total of 12 days with Clarkson Evans Limited (Clarkson Evans) in July 2002. They carried out 27 interviews with managers and staff and interviewed the managing director. Inspectors interviewed 29 learners at the training centre and on site. They also interviewed one workplace manager and seven workplace supervisors. They examined 24 portfolios of evidence and 33 individual learning plans as well as other documents relating to Clarkson Evans's work and looked at data on retention and achievement. Inspectors observed and graded four learning sessions. They also studied the company's most recent self-assessment report and action plan, which had been produced in December 2001 and updated in February and June 2002.

Grades awarded to learning sessions

	Grade 1	Grade 2	Grade 3	Grade 4	Grade 5	Grade 6	Grade 7	Total
Construction	0	0	2	1	1	0	0	4
Total	0	0	2	1	1	0	0	4

THE PROVIDER AS A WHOLE

Context

2. Clarkson Evans was formed in 1981 and set up its training school in 1998. Learners come from Gloucestershire and parts of Wales. There are six training staff and 75 learners in government-funded training. Seventy-three of the learners are advanced modern apprentices and two are foundation modern apprentices. Clarkson Evans also offers commercial training, which provides additional income for the training centre, and further courses for government-funded learners.

3. The government-funded training is funded through Gloucestershire Learning and Skills Council (LSC). In Gloucestershire, the service industries employ 74 per cent of the workforce. Construction employs 13 per cent of those in work. In May 2002, the rate of unemployment in Gloucestershire was 2.2 per cent, compared with the national average of 3 per cent. In 2001, the proportion of school leavers achieving five or more general certificates of secondary education (GCSEs) at grade C or above in Gloucestershire was 58.3 per cent, compared with the national average of 47.9 per cent. According to the 1991 census, 1.8 per cent of the population in Gloucestershire are from minority ethnic groups, compared with 6.2 per cent nationally.

Work-based learning for young people

4. Learners in construction produce good work. Assessment is good and the training centre has particularly good accommodation and resources. Learners have good opportunities for learning and assessment in the workplace. However, they make slow progress towards their key skills awards. On-the-job training is poorly planned. A high proportion of learners leave their training early without achieving their apprenticeship frameworks. Almost all learners who take external tests achieve at least a pass. Most learners are making steady progress towards their national vocational qualifications (NVQs).

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

Grade 3

5. Clarkson Evans has 150 employees. The company has recently gained its second Investors in People award, a national standard for improving an organisation's performance through its people. The training team has six staff, a training manager, four trainers and assessors and an administrator. The training manager reports to one of the company's six directors. The company has an equal opportunities policy, which was recently revised. The company has some written policies and procedures for assuring the quality of work-based learning. However, many of these are new and lack detail. The most recent self-assessment report was produced by the training team in December 2001 and included an action plan, which was updated in February and again in June 2002.

STRENGTHS

- good internal communications
- good strategy for training
- good staff development
- successful recruitment of learners from minority ethnic groups

WEAKNESSES

- inadequate management information system
- insufficient focus on targets for training
- insufficient reinforcement of equality of opportunity during training

OTHER IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED

- more involvement of training staff in producing the business plan
- further development of procedures to assure quality

6. There is good communication among staff. Staff share information about the business and the learning programmes through daily discussions and frequent meetings. Staff and learners make good use of noticeboards and e-mail. Directors and senior managers are e-mailed when learners achieve their qualifications. The company produces a glossy newsletter each year for staff and customers. This contains useful information about the company's business plan, its training and its team-building events. Learners and staff meet daily over breakfast to share information and monitor workplace tasks. An annual award ceremony emphasises the importance of training and rewards learners and staff for their hard work. Members of the training team work well together. Staff are aware of the company's objectives. However, training staff are not sufficiently involved in producing the business plan.

7. The company has a good strategy for providing training. Managers have a good understanding of the skills needed by learners for the company to expand and maintain the quality of its work. Learners receive training in both technical and personal skills. The learners are employed by the company and work effectively in small teams on a variety of projects. This work provides good evidence towards learners' NVOs and contributes to the company's success. Learners have the chance to gain promotion in the company as they achieve their qualifications. Some learners are already successful team leaders and manage their own jobs. The company won a national training award in 2001 for its modern apprenticeship training. Clarkson Evans values training and has invested in a well-resourced training centre and a dedicated team of staff, who have good electrical and training experience. Learners and staff carry out good work, which has contributed to a five-fold increase in turnover over the past five years.

8. There is good staff development. All staff are encouraged to train regularly and develop new skills. The training team has a good record of staff development, which includes achieving teaching certificates and assessors' awards. One member of staff has attended a comprehensive course in teaching key skills and has produced good key skills assignments for learners. The course has helped the training team to improve key skills training. Other staff are scheduled to attend the same course. Training has enabled the training team to evaluate and improve the support it gives to learners and to develop new schemes of work and training resources. Recent training for staff has included courses in management, accountancy, portable appliance testing and information technology (IT). However, staff do not evaluate all the external courses they attend.

9. The company's management information system is inadequate. Information about learners' progress is not consistently stored and regularly updated. Nor is it used effectively to help with planning training. The training manager has an electronic chart showing learners' progress towards their NVOs and key skills awards. This is updated every six months but it is not shared with team leaders and managers. Managers do not produce regular reports about learners for the directors or the team leaders. The training team does not use management information regularly at its team meetings. The company has a database containing learners' personnel records, which also shows the dates and results of their examinations. The training team is currently designing spreadsheets to record details of learners' progress reviews and completion of NVO units.

10. Insufficient emphasis is given to targets for modern apprenticeship training. The requirements of the contract with the local LSC are not routinely conveyed to the training team and team leaders to help them give good support to learners. Individual members of the training team do not have performance targets relating to training. Team members generally expect learners to complete their training within four years but there are no targets for completing the various parts of the apprenticeship such as the NVO and key skills award. The team leaders and their managers do not know whether learners are achieving their targets. Some learners are not set short-term targets to achieve between progress reviews.

Equality of opportunity**Contributory grade 3**

11. At 12 per cent, the proportion of learners from minority ethnic groups is high, compared with the proportion of the local population from minority ethnic groups, at 1.8 per cent. The company ensures that learners from minority ethnic groups take a prominent role in demonstrations at open days and other recruitment events. The company encourages women to enter training. The company targets girls' schools in its marketing of the training.

12. The company has a satisfactory equal opportunities policy, which has recently been updated. The policy contains clear statements on issues relating to training. Learners receive a copy of the policy as part of the staff handbook at induction. The handbook also contains the company's policies on maternity, paternity and parental leave and time off work to deal with emergencies relating to dependants. Learners' inductions include training in equal opportunities, but the training does not set equal opportunities within the context of the construction industry.

13. Learners' awareness of equal opportunities is not reinforced throughout their training. Most learners are aware of the complaints procedure and of their responsibilities as learners. However, the company does not monitor learners' experiences. Progress reviews are rarely used to discuss equal opportunities and the outcomes of any discussions are not recorded. Many handouts contain images of white men only.

14. The company collects and analyses data on learners' gender, age, ethnicity and disabilities. Breakdowns of this information are produced but there are no targets to attract under-represented groups. Nor does the company evaluate the effectiveness of its equal opportunities policy.

Quality assurance**Contributory grade 3**

15. Quality assurance is satisfactory. All the important aspects of training, such as recruitment, induction, progress reviews, on- and off-the-job training, assessment and internal verification are well organised and fair. However, the company's written policies and procedures for assuring the quality of work-based learning are new and lack detail. Quality assurance is managed by the training director and carried out by the training team.

16. Training is improving continually and there are regular reviews of different aspects of the training. For example, inductions have improved since the introduction of checklists, tailored support for those who start their training earlier or later than most learners, and a wider range of presentations. The forms for recording reviews of learners' progress have been improved twice in the past three years. The company's forms and procedures are currently being revised for the next intake of learners. The company has used questionnaires to gather feedback from learners for the past three years. However, these do not provide sufficient information for an in-depth analysis of learners' experience. For example, they do not provide information about the experience of working towards specific qualifications. Feedback is also gathered at learners' progress reviews. The company does not seek written feedback from team leaders and managers. Lessons and assessments are observed and staff are given feedback.

17. The quality assurance of assessments is satisfactory. The plans for individual assessments are well presented and well understood by learners and staff. The paperwork for assessments is clear and simple in presentation and content. Internal verification meets the awarding body's requirements. However, internal verification plans are not used effectively. Individual learners' progress is displayed on a wall chart. Learners know how much progress they have made and what they need to do to achieve their qualifications.

18. Clarkson Evans prepared its most recent self-assessment report in December 2001. The report covers all the necessary aspects of learning and includes a clear action plan. The action plan has helped the company to make continual improvements and set clear priorities. All training staff were involved in producing the self-assessment report. The report accurately identified many strengths and weaknesses of the training and gave grades which the inspectors matched.

Good Practice
<i>The directors send learners a letter of congratulations when they pass their external tests.</i>

AREAS OF LEARNING

Construction

Grade 3

Programmes inspected	Number of learners	Contributory grade
Work-based learning for young people	75	3

19. There are 73 advanced modern apprentices and two foundation modern apprentices in construction. Five of the advanced modern apprentices are working towards modern apprenticeships in security systems. The remainder are working towards modern apprenticeships in electrical installation. Many learners are referred by the careers service or by schools. Others respond to advertisements in the local press or are recommended by employees or friends. Except for the five advanced modern apprentices in security systems, all the learners are employed by Clarkson Evans. Applicants for training attend an open day and an assessment day. Applicants who attend the assessment day have an initial assessment and an interview. Unsuccessful applicants receive feedback and the opportunity to apply again at a later date. During their training, learners work at various sites housing sites. The company provides on-the-job training and assessment as well as off-the-job training in its own purpose-built training centre for one or two days each week. All NVQ assessment is carried out in the workplace by Clarkson Evans's training staff.

The following tables show the achievement and retention rates available up to the time of the inspection.

Work-based learning for young people																
Advanced modern apprenticeships (AMA)	2001-02		2000-01		1999-2000											
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Number of starts	27		35		58											
Retained*	0		0	0	0	0										
Successfully completed	0		0	0	0	0										
Still in learning	23		23	66	27	47										

*retained learners are those who have stayed in learning for at least the planned duration of their training programmes, or have successfully completed their programme within the time allowed

Work-based learning for young people																
Foundation modern apprenticeships (FMA)																
	2001-02		2000-01		1995-96											
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Number of starts	1		2													
Retained*	0		0	0												
Successfully completed	0		0	0												
Still in learning	1		1	50												

*retained learners are those who have stayed in learning for at least the planned duration of their training programmes, or have successfully completed their programme within the time allowed

STRENGTHS

- good quality of learners' work
- good assessment
- particularly good accommodation and resources
- good work placements

WEAKNESSES

- slow progress towards key skills awards
- no planned on-the-job training

OTHER IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED

- clearer target-setting in progress reviews
- more involvement of workplace supervisors in planning training and reviewing progress

20. Learners produce good practical work. The training on-site focuses on skills, accuracy, knowledge and speed. Learners work in a professional environment on good-quality building work. They consistently achieve the professional standard required and, in many cases, achieve excellence. Several teams, each consisting of a team leader and two learners, have achieved national awards which recognise good work. The company celebrates achievements at prize-giving ceremonies. Many learners produce written work and portfolios of a very good quality.

21. Assessments are fair and accurate. All assessment takes place in the workplace. Assessments are well planned and co-ordinated. Tutors have good systems to prompt

them when opportunities for assessment arise. Evidence of learners' competences includes observation of practical tasks, witness testimony, photographs and questioning. Detailed records are kept and learners receive comprehensive feedback that helps them to improve. Additional coaching is given when necessary. All the assessors have or are working towards training qualifications. Internal verification is satisfactory. However, an internal verification plan that exists is not used and the internal verifiers do not set clear, measurable targets.

22. Accommodation and resources are particularly good. The training centre has good-quality fixtures and fittings. The training room is air-conditioned and has comfortable seats, computer projectors and other teaching aids. The training centre's workshops have facilities for simulating different types of installation. Most learning materials are well presented and in good supply. Learners use a small network of up-to-date computers. Learners are provided with good protective equipment and tools, and use good-quality plant and equipment on site.

23. Clarkson Evans provides good opportunities for learning and assessment in the workplace. The company is involved in good-quality projects to construct new buildings. Learners' workloads enable them to cover all the requirements of their NVQs. Learners work on well-run building sites operated by large, national construction companies.

24. Learners' make slow progress towards their key skills awards. Many learners do not consider key skills a priority and focus on practical skills. The company is aware of this weakness and is now ensuring that learners understand the importance of background knowledge and key skills. Staff have received training which emphasised the importance of key skills. Recent changes have ensured that key skills training is integrated with occupational off-the-job training. Of the learners who started training in 1999-2000, 48 per cent left early without achieving their apprenticeship frameworks. However, nine of the 25 learners who left early went to work for another electrical contractor. Nine of the remaining learners have completed their training and are awaiting certification by the awarding body. Three learners have not completed their training because they have made slow progress in key skills. Achievement rates in external tests are high. Learners take the tests when staff judge them to be ready. Almost all learners who enter the tests achieve at least a pass. Most learners have portfolios that contain a quantity and quality of work that is appropriate for their stage of the course.

25. On-the-job training is not planned. There are no schemes of work. Nor are there any target dates for completing aspects of training, except for those that are set during progress reviews. Workplace supervisors have little involvement in managing the training. Most workplace supervisors have little knowledge of NVQs, modern apprenticeship frameworks or key skills.

26. Progress reviews take place every 12 weeks and are satisfactory and well recorded. Learners are issued with action plans containing targets that are checked at subsequent

progress reviews. Progress reviews have improved over the past three years. Continual improvements have been made to the sheets that record progress reviews and more focused, measurable and challenging targets have been introduced. However, some targets are unclear and lack precise timescales. The progress reviews focus on progress and fail to adequately cover other important matters, such as equal opportunities. Workplace supervisors are insufficiently involved in the progress reviews. They do not attend progress reviews and do not receive written feedback or copies of the progress review sheets.

27. The recruitment process is satisfactory. The company invites prospective learners and their parents to an open day. Prospective learners meet current learners and obtain good advice on the nature of the job and the demands of the training. All applicants are assessed. The results are used in selection but are not used to assess learners' needs for individual support. The results are not routinely shared with training staff. Good one-to-one support is available to learners throughout their training. However, there is no structured plan for additional or basic skills support.

Good Practice

As part of the quality assurance system, learners' progress reviews are checked against a checklist of content.