

INSPECTION REPORT

Clarkson Evans Limited

11 November 2005



ADULT LEARNING
INSPECTORATE

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 learning within the remit of a single inspectorate. The ALI is responsible for inspecting a wide range of government-funded learning, including:

- work-based learning for all people aged over 16
- provision in further education colleges for people aged 19 and over
- **learnndirect** 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.

Pre-inspection analysis

The resources allocated to a cycle 2 inspection are primarily determined by the findings from the previous inspection. Account is also taken of information about achievement and retention obtained from the funding body, and any significant changes in the size or scope of the provision.

Where a provider has received good grades in cycle 1, the cycle 2 inspection is relatively light. If the provider offers a number of areas of learning, a restricted sample is inspected.

Where a provider has received satisfactory grades in cycle 1, the cycle 2 inspection is less intensive and it is possible that not all areas of learning are included.

Where there are significant unsatisfactory grades from cycle 1, the intensity of the cycle 2 inspection is broadly the same as cycle 1, and all significant areas of learning are inspected.

Providers that have not previously been inspected will receive a full inspection.

Overall effectiveness

The grades given for areas of learning and leadership and management will be used to arrive at a judgement about the overall effectiveness of the provider.

An **outstanding** provider should typically have leadership and management and at least half of the areas of learning judged to be a grade 1. All area of learning grades will be graded 1 or 2.

A **good** provider should have leadership and management and at least half of the area of learning grades judged to be a grade 2 or better. A good training provider should not have any grade 4s, and few grade 3s in the areas of learning.

A **satisfactory** provider should have adequate or better grades in leadership and management and in at least two thirds of the area of learning grades. An adequate provider might have a range of grades across areas of learning, some of which might be graded 4.

Provision will normally be deemed to be **inadequate** where more than one third of the area of learning grades and/or leadership and management are judged to be inadequate.

The final decision as to whether the provision is inadequate rests with the Chief Inspector of Adult Learning.

Grading

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

- *grade 1 - outstanding*
- *grade 2 - good*
- *grade 3 - satisfactory*
- *grade 4 - inadequate*

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INSPECTION REPORT

DESCRIPTION OF THE PROVIDER

1. Clarkson Evans Limited (CEL) is an electrical contractor with a core business of installing domestic electrical systems in new-build houses constructed by a number of national house building companies. CEL was formed in 1981 and established its own training centre in 1998 to meet a shortfall of suitable training provision in electrical installation. The centre achieved Centre of Vocational Excellence (CoVE) status in November 2004. The company is located in modern accommodation at a business park in Gloucester and has branches in Birmingham, Wiltshire and South Wales. All off-the-job training takes place at CEL's CoVE training centre in Gloucester.

2. There are 127 advanced apprentices on a work-based learning programme for young people in electrical installation. Work-based learning for young people is funded by Gloucestershire Learning and Skills Council (LSC). CEL also has 18 adult learners on an electrical installation advanced apprenticeship funded by the European Social Fund (ESF). Learners come from Gloucestershire, the west of England and South Wales. The company also offers commercial training for electrical contractors and other employers in a range of specialist electrical installation topics, including inspection, testing and the electrical installation regulations. These courses provide additional income for the training centre.

3. CEL has 16 full-time and two part-time staff in the training team. The training director supervises the training programmes, which two full-time staff manage day to day. The rest of the team comprises four assessors, six tutor/assessors and five quality assurance/administration staff.

OVERALL EFFECTIVENESS

Grade 2

4. **The overall effectiveness of the provision is good.** CEL's leadership and management are outstanding, as are its arrangements for quality improvement. Its approach to equality of opportunity is good. Training is good in construction, planning and the built environment.

5. **The inspection team was broadly confident in the reliability of the self-assessment process.** The company has a well-organised approach to self-assessment. Information for self-assessment is collated from a variety of sources, including learners' and employers' feedback, lesson observations, focus groups, awarding body reports and benchmarking of performance against other providers.

6. **The provider has demonstrated that it is in a good position to make improvements.** CEL's arrangements for the quality improvement of its training provision are very effective and successful. The company is in a good position to keep up to date with changes and developments in training and the sector and ensure the validity and currency of its provision.

KEY CHALLENGES FOR CLARKSON EVANS LIMITED:

- establish high levels of apprenticeship completions
- continue to reduce the time taken to complete apprenticeships
- improve target-setting for learners
- increase the involvement of workplace supervisors
- introduce closer monitoring of workplace conditions, particularly with external employers and at the start of training
- maintain the quality of provision while expanding

GRADES

grade 1 = outstanding, grade 2 = good, grade 3 = satisfactory, grade 4 = inadequate

Leadership and management		1
Contributory grades:		
Equality of opportunity		2
Quality improvement		1

Construction, planning and the built environment			2
Contributory areas:	Number of learners	Contributory grade	
Building services		2	
Apprenticeships for young people	127	2	
Other government-funded provision	18	2	

ABOUT THE INSPECTION

7. The inspection reported on and graded CEL's provision in construction, planning and the built environment.

Number of inspectors	3
Number of inspection days	12
Number of learners interviewed	38
Number of staff interviewed	20
Number of employers interviewed	10
Number of locations/sites/learning centres visited	15
Number of partners/external agencies interviewed	4
Number of visits	1

KEY FINDINGS

Achievements and standards

8. **Learners on the work-based programmes for young people make good progress towards achieving their qualifications.** Sixty-three per cent of learners who started in September 2003 have completed more than half of the national vocational qualification (NVQ) at level 3. Ninety-one per cent of these learners have also completed the technical certificate and key skills.

9. **Sixty-nine per cent of those who started in 2004 have also completed their key skills qualifications. Over 90 per cent of CEL's learners who have completed their training since 2002 have progressed to supervisory positions in the company.** Learners are enthusiastic about the quality of their work and their progress on the training programme.

10. **Learners on the work-based programmes for young people develop good practical skills and are able to use their background knowledge in a work context.** Learners consistently achieve the professional standard required. For example, one second-year learner on site quickly reviewed a folder of complex working drawings to identify the components needed to carry out a domestic kitchen installation.

11. **Learners' portfolios of evidence display electrical installation work of a high standard.** Their portfolios contain a good range of on-site evidence.

12. There is good retention of the adult learners on the ESF-funded advanced apprenticeship. All 18 learners starting the programmes in 2004-05 and 2005-06 are still in learning.

13. Completion rates for the advanced apprenticeship for young people are satisfactory. Fifty per cent of those who started training in 2001-02 have completed the full framework, and three learners, another 12 per cent, remain in training. The retention rates are improving. For those that started in 2002-03 the retention rate is low at 46 per cent. This rate has improved to 71 per cent for the 2004-05 group and is currently 92 per cent for the 2004-05 group.

The quality of provision

Grades given to learning sessions

	Grade 1	Grade 2	Grade 3	Grade 4	Total
Construction, planning and the built environment	1	2	3	0	6
Total	1	2	3	0	6

14. **The quality of the off-the-job training resources is very high.** All teaching rooms are air-conditioned and well equipped with a range of practical teaching aids, including interactive whiteboards.

15. **Tutors effectively use a range of recently developed visual aids and new technology to enhance the learning process.** Staff have a good range of industrial experience, including engineering, wiring and maintenance, and a sufficient number of them hold or are

working towards the appropriate assessors' qualifications.

16. Attendance at off-the-job training is very high. During the inspection, 97 per cent of learners were in attendance in observed sessions.

17. CEL provides its learners with tasks to develop their range of learning styles, and the company differentiates its approaches to include an appropriate range of styles. Twenty learners had identified support needs at the time of inspection and CEL was effectively supporting 17 of them for their literacy and numeracy needs.

18. The company has developed off-the-job learning effectively to meet learners' and employers' needs. Learners have been able to request additional practical sessions to reinforce their learning and alternative units of accreditation have been offered to learners employed in other sectors of work.

19. CEL emphasises the health and safety of its learners well. It covers this thoroughly in induction, where learners are also taken on a site visit to see health and safety measures in action. Off-the-job training includes well-managed and interesting sessions on a range of health and safety topics.

20. The practical workshop is satisfactory and there is a good supply of consumable resources and up-to-date industry testing equipment. The practical workshop is being extended and the centre also has its own achievement measurement (AM2) test centre. Handouts and other learning resources are high quality and adapted to the requirements of different learners.

21. All teaching and learning observed was satisfactory or better. In the best sessions, learning was very well managed, with high levels of learner involvement. Learners evaluated each other's views and levels of understanding. A minority of sessions were not adequately structured to meet all of the learners' needs.

22. The assessment process is satisfactory. Learners are clear on the process, including the appeals procedure. Assessment records are clear and record judgements accurately.

23. There is satisfactory use of assessment of the learners' performance by direct observation in the workplace. Workplace supervisors are not adequately involved or informed in some assessment processes.

24. The identification of additional learning needs and provision of support are satisfactory. CEL assesses all of its learners, for their literacy and numeracy skills and preferred learning style, at the start of their programmes.

25. CEL's employees receive 'toolbox talks' based on real incidents in the company and all young learners wear red tee shirts on site to identify them as inexperienced workers.

26. Three learners with identified dyslexia support needs were not being supported adequately. CEL is aware of this issue and the company is taking appropriate measures to access specialist support for these learners.

27. Some learners were unable to cover the full range of on-the-job activities for the

NVQ at level 3 with their own employer. CEL has ensured that it was able to carry out this work by facilitating a work placement with another employer.

28. Learners' progress reviews are weak. Targets are often vague, without clear measurable outcomes. There are insufficient short-, medium- and long-term targets. Targets are not sufficiently detailed to ensure that learners understand what on-site evidence they need to collect.

29. Workplace supervisors are not sufficiently involved in learners' progress reviews. They are not fully aware of learners' progress on all aspects of the apprenticeship framework. They do not receive a copy of the progress reviews. For some learners, too many progress reviews take place at CEL's training centre.

Leadership and management

30. CEL has established particularly good partnerships and collaborative links with a wide range of external agencies. These include the Sector Skills Council, the LSC, development agencies, business links, trade associations and other training providers.

31. Frequent work with the Sector Skills Council enables CEL to prepare itself for, and to participate fully in, any changes to the national standards and syllabus requirements in line with learners' and employers' needs. As well as working on the syllabus for an NVQ at level 4, a member of CEL's electrical training team was involved in designing a new NVQ at level 3 and was part of the technical certificate advisory group, set up to agree the content of the new technical certificate for the sector.

32. CEL's staff are regular participants and contributors to national seminars and training events in the electrical installation and engineering sectors. The training director was recently a judge at the LSC's national apprenticeship awards event. CEL works in partnership with business links on a skills brokerage initiative, which is designed to promote links between employers and training providers.

33. During CEL's preparation of its bid to become a CoVE, and subsequent to achieving the status, the company has been very successful in developing its training resources. Classrooms and practical training areas are particularly well equipped. Learners have good access to up-to-date equipment and materials due to CEL's strong links with manufacturers. The investments made at the time of becoming a CoVE have been supplemented by donations from manufacturers.

34. CEL's senior management provide good clear strategic direction for the apprenticeship programme. The need for good-quality craft training in the sector was a driving motivator for the company to start training its own apprentices. The close attention and high priority paid to the programme by senior management gives all staff the incentive and confidence to drive the programme forward.

35. Learners' success is celebrated widely in the company. Its senior management closely identify the success of its learners with the projected growth of the company.

36. The company has a clear, consistent strategy for ensuring that it can deliver all the requirements for successful completion of the apprenticeship framework in-house, without the need to use subcontractors. This extends to the technical certificate and the

externally accredited achievement measurement (AM2) test. Establishing the resources for completion of the accredited achievement measurement test in-house allows the enrolment of learners at relatively short notice, without the need for them to travel several miles away to another centre.

37. CEL has maintained and strongly reinforced the good staff development that was identified at the previous inspection. CEL has also continued to invest significantly in staff development to maintain and improve standards of teaching and training. The company continues to encourage staff to train regularly and develop new skills. CEL has a good record of staff development, which includes achieving teaching certificates and assessors' awards. The company has responded to the shortage of qualified training staff in the industry by employing staff with the relevant technical qualifications and then investing in teaching courses for them.

38. CEL encourages and supports its staff to spend days on site to gain current practical experience and increase their vocational knowledge. Since the previous inspection, CEL has responded to the demands of managing a growing team by restructuring and allocating specific areas of responsibility to key staff who have received appropriate training to prepare them for the new roles.

39. Over the past six years, the company has been very successful in winning a number of prestigious awards nationally and regionally for the quality and excellence of its vocational training arrangements. These awards have given the company a very high profile within the building industry sector, and nationally and regionally among other training providers. Immediately before the inspection, CEL was given a national employer training award, including a significant cash prize in recognition of the quality of its practical learning opportunities. The company is particularly proud of the national awards that it has won and it regards them as an endorsement of its approach to vocational training.

40. At the previous inspection, the company's management information system was identified as inadequate. **The company has now introduced an enhanced system that produces a good range of reports to help develop management decisions.** The system is still under development and is now a very effective part of the management process.

41. CEL promotes training opportunities to minority ethnic groups through attendance at careers events in several local schools. It particularly emphasises the promotion of training to communities in areas of social deprivation. The company has participated in an LSC project on race equality. The company's staff are establishing effective contacts with organisations that work with minority ethnic groups.

42. The company's development plan identifies actions and targets for widening participation to a training programme that is currently oversubscribed. The strategy is to promote training to under-represented groups but to recruit learners based on their performance at candidate assessment days. The company has recently widened training opportunities by accessing ESF resources to facilitate the adult apprenticeship scheme.

43. CEL offers work-experience opportunities for young people with disabilities. For one such learner, this has led to full employment. The ground floor of the training centre has good access and appropriate facilities for persons with physical disabilities.

44. The company's stance on equality of opportunity and diversity is clearly stated in a comprehensive set of policies and procedures.

45. **Learners are well aware of how to make a complaint or raise an issue of concern, whether in the workplace or in the training centre.** CEL's learners are able to access advice and guidance from a staff member who works effectively in liaison between them and senior managers in the main company. In these cases, the company's staff prioritise the social welfare and health of apprentices.

46. **Learners are well treated and supported through good teamwork in the workplace.** Many work in small teams managed by a team leader, who is commonly a former apprentice. Learners that may have any concerns are able to consult with a range of staff during their weekly day-release work at the training centre. In the past, some issues have been raised and managers at CEL have made changes to staff acting as team leaders for apprentices.

47. **CEL's arrangements for the quality improvement of its training provision are very effective and successful.** Although the company does not have any formal systems for the quality assurance of the training, its relatively small size and the effectiveness of its internal and external communications guarantee that any requirements for improvements are readily identified.

48. **Training is improving continually and the company keeps all aspects of its training arrangements under constant review.** The company has steadily reduced the length of its advanced apprenticeship framework while improving the achievement rate and retention rate.

49. **The training arrangements for mature learners on the ESF-funded apprenticeship have been improved following a careful review of the first course.** This ensures that learners are able to take full advantage of their prior experience and to progress at a pace that meets their needs.

50. **CEL is introducing new technology, distance-learning material and access to virtual learning resources for its learners, to enable them to study at remote locations or during periods away from the Gloucester centre.** CEL has carried out an effective review of the key policies and procedures of each aspect of the training programme. It has introduced a consistent set of policies and procedures and the company carries out good quality control of them.

51. **CEL makes good use of feedback from learners, employers and other contacts, so that it is kept well informed about learners' progress and any concerns that they may have.** It uses feedback from learners and employers regularly to determine how satisfied each is with the service that the company provides.

52. **The company has a well-organised approach to self-assessment.** Self-assessment is carried out annually and the most recent self-assessment report was published in October 2005. CEL uses its regular contact with other CoVEs as a source of bench-marking information for compiling its self-assessment report.

53. **CEL does not subcontract any part of its apprentice training provision.** It took the

decision to teach the technical certificate at its Gloucester centre as a result of its dissatisfaction with the quality of provision at its previous subcontractor.

54. The findings and judgements contained in the self-assessment report matched many of those identified by the inspectors, and inspectors found other significant strengths. However, inspectors judged some of the strengths listed in the report to be no more than normal practice.

55. Internal verification is satisfactory, with sufficient sampling of assessments and portfolios to satisfy the requirements of the awarding bodies. CEL maintains close contact with the awarding bodies to keep well informed of changes in standards and qualifications. Internal verifiers and assessors meet regularly to discuss assessment practices and to share information.

56. Following a recent development, the learners' progress reviews now require the assessor to formally question the learners on how they are treated in the workplace. The process also aims to check on learners' understanding of equality and diversity issues. This process is relatively new and is not yet managed confidently by some reviewers. It does not yet have a significant effect on raising the learners' awareness. The process is not adequate in monitoring workplace conditions, particularly when the progress review takes place in the training centre.

Leadership and management

Strengths

- good partnerships and collaborative links with external agencies
- good use of its CoVE status to develop learning resources
- clear direction for apprenticeship programmes from senior management
- good staff development
- good action to improve training

Weaknesses

- no significant weaknesses identified

Construction, planning and the built environment

Building services

Grade 2

Strengths

- good progression by learners
- good acquisition of learners' skills
- high-quality off-the-job training resources
- responsive development of the curriculum

Weaknesses

- weak progress reviews for learners

WHAT LEARNERS LIKE ABOUT CLARKSON EVANS LIMITED:

- 'brilliant resources at the centre'
- 'friendly and approachable staff'
- 'staff know what they are talking about'
- 'I know where I can get help if I need it'
- 'I love working on site'
- 'they make the learning real for what I do on site'
- 'the food is really great'

WHAT LEARNERS THINK CLARKSON EVANS LIMITED COULD IMPROVE:

- the car parking at the training centre
- the range of food available in the canteen
- the information relating to their portfolios of evidence - 'I wasn't clear at first about what I had to put in my portfolio'

DETAILED INSPECTION FINDINGS

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

Grade 1

Strengths

- good partnerships and collaborative links with external agencies
- good use of its CoVE status to develop learning resources
- clear direction for apprenticeship programmes from senior management
- good staff development
- good action to improve training

Weaknesses

- no significant weaknesses identified

57. CEL has established particularly good partnerships and collaborative links with a wide range of external agencies. These include the Sector Skills Council, the LSC, development agencies, business links, trade associations and other training providers. The benefit of these links is that the company is in a good position to keep up to date with changes and developments in training and the sector, and ensure the validity and currency of its provision. Frequent work with the Sector Skills Council enables CEL to prepare for and to participate fully in any changes to the national standards and syllabus requirements in line with learners' and employers' needs. As well as working on the syllabus for an NVQ at level 4, a member of CEL's electrical training team was involved in designing a new NVQ at level 3 and was part of the technical certificate advisory group, set up to agree the content of the new technical certificate for the sector. By maintaining close, effective contact, CEL is able to safeguard the best interests of the sector through ensuring the relevance of the occupational standards and their use and application in training the skilled workforce. CEL's staff are regular participants and contributors to national seminars and training events in the electrical installation and engineering sectors. The training director was recently a judge at the LSC national apprenticeship awards event. CEL works in partnership with business links on a skills brokerage initiative, designed to promote links between employers and training providers.

58. During the preparation of its bid to become a CoVE, and subsequent to achieving the status, CEL has been very successful in developing its training resources. Classrooms and practical training areas are particularly well equipped. Learners have good access to up-to-date equipment and materials due to the company's strong links with manufacturers. The investments made at the time of becoming a CoVE have been supplemented by donations from manufacturers, which have enabled the company to provide good, realistic practical training. The training areas project a good professional image that stimulates and enthuses the learners. All learners speak highly of the resources and how they contribute to the value of their programmes. CEL is in the process of increasing the size and scope of its practical training areas following its recent acquisition of an additional building adjacent to its current premises. The investment in new training technology, including virtual learning facilities, is enabling learners to make effective use of their time wherever they are located. CoVE status has enabled CEL to expand the availability of its training to employees from other companies. The expansion includes apprenticeship training, specialised courses for

experienced electricians, and short taster courses for people from other sectors considering a career change. In the past year there has been a significant increase in the number of external electrical apprentices in training. CEL now trains more than 40 apprentices on behalf of 24 different employers. The company offers a range of specialist short courses for experienced electricians, most of which lead to external certification. A recent addition has been a five-week basic electrical course for adult newcomers to the industry. This intensive practical-based course is designed for people who would like to learn the basics of electrical installation as an entry route into the industry.

59. CEL's senior management provide good, clear strategic direction for the apprenticeship programme. The need for good-quality craft training in the sector was a driving motivator for the company to start training its own apprentices. The close attention and high priority paid to the programme by senior management gives all staff the incentive and confidence to drive the programme forward. Senior managers recognise that the company has a particular strength in its core activity and have resolved to maintain the expertise and reputation of its training arrangements by continuing to specialise in that core area. Learners' success is celebrated widely in the company, and senior management closely identify the success of its learners with the projected growth of the company.

60. The company has a clear, consistent strategy for ensuring that all the requirements for successful completion of the apprenticeship framework can be delivered in-house, without the need to use subcontractors. This extends to the technical certificate and the externally accredited achievement measurement test. Establishing the resources for completion of the test in-house allows the enrolment of learners at relatively short notice, without the need for them to travel several miles away to another centre.

61. The good staff development that was identified at the previous inspection has been maintained and strongly reinforced. CEL has also continued to invest significantly in staff development to maintain and improve the standards of teaching and training. Staff continue to be encouraged to train regularly and develop new skills. The company has a good record of staff development, which includes achieving teaching certificates and assessors' awards. CEL has responded to the shortage of qualified training staff in the industry by employing staff with the relevant technical qualifications and then investing in teaching courses for them. None of the current electrical installation teaching team members had teaching qualifications when they joined the team but now all of them have completed these qualifications or are working towards them. CEL offers very good opportunities for training staff to study for additional technical qualifications so that they can teach more advanced courses. The company is approved to provide assessor and internal verifier training in-house, which gives it good control over its trainee assessors' and verifiers' progress towards completion of their programmes. CEL encourages and supports its staff to spend days on site to gain current practical experience and increase their vocational knowledge. Since the previous inspection, CEL has responded to the demands of managing a growing team by restructuring and allocating specific areas of responsibility to key staff who have received appropriate training to prepare them for the new roles.

62. CEL has been very successful over the past six years in winning a number of prestigious awards nationally and regionally for the quality and excellence of its vocational training arrangements. These awards have given the company a very high profile within the building industry sector, and nationally and regionally among other training providers. Immediately before the inspection, CEL received a national employer training award,

including a significant cash prize in recognition of the quality of its practical learning opportunities. The company is particularly proud of the national awards that it has won and regards them as an endorsement of its approach to vocational training.

63. At the previous inspection, the company's management information system was identified as inadequate. Since the previous inspection, CEL has investigated and trialled a number of different management software systems, in order to identify a version that would quickly produce accurate reports and facilitate effective monitoring of learners' progress and course performance. The company has now introduced an enhanced system that produces a good range of reports to help develop management decisions. The system is still under development and is now a very effective part of the management process.

Equality of opportunity

Contributory grade 2

64. Although CEL has only one female apprentice at present, it continues to promote training opportunities in electrical installation to women. Representatives from the company frequently attend local careers events and use good promotional materials that emphasise attracting female applicants. The training centre hosts 'taster days' for female pupils from local schools. The company has provided local employers with practical guidance on breaking down gender segregation in vocational training.

65. The current proportion of learners from minority ethnic groups is 4 per cent, all of whom CEL employs. According to the 2001 census, the proportion of the local population who come from minority ethnic groups is 7.5 per cent in Gloucester, 2.8 per cent Gloucestershire and less than 1 per cent in Herefordshire. Many of the external employers recruit learners from the more rural districts of Gloucestershire and Herefordshire. CEL promotes training opportunities to minority ethnic groups through attendance at careers events in several local schools. A particular emphasis is given to promotion of training to communities in areas of social deprivation. The company has participated in an LSC project on race equality. Company staff are establishing effective contacts with organisations that work with minority ethnic groups. At the time of the previous inspection, CEL had eight learners from minority ethnic groups. Of these, 63 per cent went on to complete their apprenticeship, a higher proportion than the general rate of completion.

66. The training company's development plan identifies actions and targets for widening participation to a training programme that is currently oversubscribed. The strategy is to promote to under-represented groups but to recruit learners based on performance at candidate assessment days. The company has recently widened training opportunities by accessing ESF resources to facilitate the adult apprenticeship scheme.

67. CEL offers work-experience opportunities for young people with disabilities. For one such learner, this has led to full employment. The ground floor of the training centre has good access and appropriate facilities for persons with physical disabilities.

68. The training company's stance on equality of opportunity and diversity is clearly stated in a comprehensive set of policies and procedures. The responsibilities of all staff, learners and employers are identified. Policy documents are presented and explained to learners during their induction programme. Learners are well aware of how to make a complaint or raise an issue of concern, whether it be in the workplace or in the training centre. CEL's learners are readily able to access advice and guidance from a staff member who works effectively as a liaison between them and senior managers in the main company. In these

cases, the company's staff give the social welfare and health of learners a high priority.

69. In a recent development, an external organisation was contracted to provide post-induction training in equality and diversity to the groups of first-year learners and to training staff. Such training has not yet been offered to the adult apprentices. Some of the first-year learners have a good understanding of their rights and responsibilities. Most learners have a satisfactory understanding of their rights.

70. Learners are well treated and supported through good teamwork in the workplace. Many work in small teams managed by a team leader, who is commonly a former apprentice. Learners that may have any concerns are able to consult with a range of staff during their weekly day-release work at the training centre. In the past, some issues have been raised and managers at CEL have made changes to staff acting as team leaders for apprentices.

71. Following a recent development, the progress reviews now require the assessor to formally question the learners on how they are treated in the workplace. The process also aims to check on learners' understanding of equality and diversity issues. This process is relatively new and is not yet confidently managed by some reviewers. The process does not yet have a significant effect on raising the awareness of learners. The process is not adequate in monitoring workplace conditions, particularly when the progress review is carried out in the training centre. In many cases, the first progress review for new learners is delayed and they may have spent up to 10 weeks in the workplace before this first monitoring process takes place.

72. During a visit to the premises of one employer, an assessor observed displays of overtly sexist pictures in workshops. Following discussions, these displays were removed. In the contractual arrangements with external employers, CEL requests a copy of the employers' equal opportunities policy. In over half of the cases, mainly the smaller companies, this policy has not been received and examined. Inadequate action has been taken to ensure the effectiveness of this monitoring process.

Quality improvement

Contributory grade 1

73. CEL's arrangements for the quality improvement of its training provision are very effective and successful. Although the company does not have any formal systems for the quality assurance of the training, its relative small size and the effectiveness of its internal and external communications guarantee that any requirements for improvements are readily identified. The main concern of staff at all levels in the company is to improve the provision. Where opportunities or requirements for improvement are identified, CEL responds quickly and positively in taking appropriate action. The company has dealt successfully with many of the weaknesses and other improvements needed that were identified at the previous inspection. In particular, it has improved significantly the progress of learners towards achievement of the key skills awards and the effectiveness of the management information system.

74. Training is improving continually and the company keeps under constant review all aspects of its training arrangements. CEL has steadily reduced the length of its advanced apprenticeship framework while improving the achievement rate and retention rate. It critically examined its recruitment and selection procedures in an effort to improve the retention of learners on the framework. By placing more emphasis on the supervisory

potential of learners there has been a progressive improvement in the retention of CEL's apprentices. The training arrangements for mature learners on the ESF-funded apprenticeship have been improved following a careful review of the first course, to ensure that learners are able to take full advantage of their prior experience and to progress at a pace that meets their needs. CEL is introducing new technology, distance-learning material and access to virtual learning resources for its learners, to enable them to study at remote locations or during periods away from the Gloucester centre. The company uses its links with external organisations as valuable sources of information on good practice in teaching, and the introduction of new technology for the improvement of teaching and learning.

75. CEL has carried out an effective review of the key policies and procedures of each aspect of the training programme. It has introduced a consistent set of policies and procedures. There is good quality control of these policies and procedures.

76. CEL makes good use of feedback from learners, employers and other contacts so that it is kept well informed about learners' progress and any concerns that they may have. The company surveys learners and employers regularly to determine how satisfied each is with the service that it provides. CEL's analysis of its employer and learner survey responses shows a high level of satisfaction with the advanced apprenticeship programme and the support that the company provides for learners and employers.

77. The company has a well-organised approach to self-assessment. Self-assessment is carried out annually and the most recent self-assessment report was published in October 2005. The training centre manager has overall responsibility for the report, which was produced with input from the rest of the training staff, learners and employers. Information for self-assessment is collated from a variety of sources, including learners' and employers' feedback, lesson observations, focus groups, awarding body reports and benchmarking of performance against other providers. CEL uses its regular contact with other CoVEs as a source of benchmarking information for compiling its self-assessment report.

78. The findings and judgements contained in the self-assessment report matched many of those identified by the inspectors, and inspectors found other significant strengths. However, inspectors judged some of the strengths listed in the report to be no more than normal practice. The self-assessment report is used for the production of a comprehensive development action plan that covers all of the identified issues. The development action plan allocates responsibilities for dealing with weaknesses and identifies areas for improvement, with a timetable for completion. The reporting arrangements, the measures for judging success and their expected effect on improving training are clearly stated.

79. Internal verification is satisfactory, with sufficient sampling of assessments and portfolios to satisfy the requirements of the awarding bodies. CEL maintains close contact with the awarding bodies to keep well informed of changes in standards and qualifications. Internal verifiers and assessors meet regularly to discuss assessment practices and to share information.

80. CEL does not subcontract any part of its apprenticeship training provision. The company took the decision to teach the technical certificate at its Gloucester centre as a result of its dissatisfaction with the quality of provision at its previous subcontractors.

81. The arrangements for quality monitoring progress reviews have been revised in order

to overcome the deficiencies in the review process. The new procedures, although an advance, have not yet fully achieved the objectives of improving target-setting or involving workplace supervisors more effectively. The revised procedure still does not require the involvement of the workplace supervisor in the review. Some learners' progress reviews are weak, with shortcomings in target-setting and insufficient involvement of workplace supervisors.

AREAS OF LEARNING

Construction, planning and the built environment

Grade 2

Contributory areas:	Number of learners	Contributory grade
Building services		2
Apprenticeships for young people	127	2
Other government-funded provision	18	2

82. There are 127 advanced apprentices on a work-based learning programme for young people. CEL also has 18 ESF-funded adult learners on an advanced apprenticeship. All learners have employed status and 65 per cent of them are employed by CEL and 35 per cent are employed by other local employers.

83. All learners work towards an NVQ at level 3 in electro-technical services and a technical certificate at level 3. Learners also carry out key skills work at level 2 in communications and application of number, and at level 1 in information technology. Towards the end of the apprenticeship all learners take a formal sector-specific practical performance assessment, generally known as the achievement measurement test. CEL's staff carry out all off-the-job training, assessment and internal verification. Learners attend the CEL training centre for one day each week for work on the technical certificate and key skills. The relevant workplace supervisor manages on site training. CEL's assessors visit learners on-site to carry out progress reviews and assessment. They carry out some progress reviews at its training centre. Two full-time staff at CEL manage the training programmes. There are 12 full-time training staff, four assessors and eight tutor/assessors and quality assurance co-ordinators.

Building services

Grade 2

Strengths

- good progression by learners
- good acquisition of learners' skills
- high-quality off-the-job training resources
- responsive development of the curriculum

Weaknesses

- weak progress reviews for learners

Achievement and standards

84. Learners on the work-based programmes for young people make good progress towards achieving their qualifications. Sixty-three per cent of learners who started in September 2003 have completed more than half of the NVQ at level 3. Ninety-one per cent of these learners have also completed the technical certificate and key skills. These learners have also demonstrated competence in the additional key skills units of working with others and improving their own learning and performance. Sixty-nine per cent of

those that started in 2004 have also completed their key skills qualifications. Learners are enthusiastic about the quality of their work and their progress on the learning programme. Workplace supervisors acknowledge the good skills of learners. CEL's apprentices make good progress in the company. Over 90 per cent of those who have completed their training since 2002 have progressed to supervisory positions in the company.

85. Learners on the work-based programmes for young people develop good practical skills and are readily able to use their background knowledge in a work context. Their on-site training focuses on skills, accuracy, knowledge and speed. Learners consistently achieve the professional standard required. For example, one second-year learner on site quickly reviewed a folder of complex working drawings to identify the components needed to carry out a domestic kitchen installation. Learners' portfolios of evidence display electrical installation work of a high standard. Portfolios contain a good range of on-site evidence, including reports of assessment by direct observation, written field notes, working drawings and site instructions. The evidence is clearly cross-referenced to performance outcomes and includes good photographic records of full domestic installations taken over time.

86. Completion rates for the advanced apprenticeship for young people are satisfactory. Fifty per cent of those who started 2001-02 have completed the full framework and three learners, another 12 per cent, remain in training. The completion rates for the two previous years are 41 and 53 per cent. The retention rates are improving. For those who started in 2002-03 the retention rate is low at 46 per cent. This rate has improved to 71 per cent for the 2003-04 group and is currently 92 per cent for the 2004-05 group.

87. There is good retention of the adult learners on the ESF-funded advanced apprenticeship. All 18 learners starting this in 2004-05 and 2005-06 are still in learning.

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

LSC funded work-based learning																	
Advanced apprenticeships	2005-06		2004-05		2003-04		2002-03		2001-02		2000-01		1999-00				
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	
Number of starts	35		49		56		28	100	26	100	29	100	38	100			
Retained*	0		0		3		9	32	16	62	13	45	25	66			
Successfully completed	0		0		3		9	32	13	50	12	41	20	53			
Still in learning	35		45		40		4	14	3	12	0	0	0	0			

*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

LSC funded work-based learning																
Apprenticeships for adults	2005-06		2004-05													
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Number of starts	9		9													
Retained*	0		0													
Successfully completed	0		0													
Still in learning	9		9													

*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

The quality of provision

88. The quality of the off-the-job training resources is very high. All teaching rooms are air-conditioned and well equipped with a range of practical teaching aids. Rooms have comfortable seats, ample desk space, computer projectors and other teaching aids. Each has interactive whiteboards that are used effectively to show graphic images and video. For example, in one session a tutor demonstrated the difference between one-way and two-way lighting circuits, using the whiteboard to give a clear visual illustration of the different wiring patterns. Tutors use a range of recently developed visual aids to enhance background knowledge sessions. Additional technology further enhances the learning process through good use of CEL's virtual learning environment, e-mail and text messaging information to learners. Staff have a good range of industrial experience, including engineering, wiring and maintenance, and a sufficient number of them hold or are working towards the appropriate assessors' qualifications.

89. CEL has developed off-the-job learning effectively to meet learners' and employers' needs. Learners have been able to request additional practical sessions to reinforce their learning and alternative units of accreditation have been offered to learners employed in other sectors of work. For example, CEL is working with two large engineering companies to develop a programme suitable for their maintenance electrician learners. Learners from these companies also have the background knowledge of domestic electrical installations effectively contextualised for their industry by tutors during background knowledge sessions. Some learners were unable to cover the full range of on-the-job activities for the NVQ at level 3 with their own employer. CEL has ensured they were able to carry out this work, by facilitating a work placement with another employer.

90. CEL's emphasis on the health and safety of learners is good. This is covered thoroughly in induction, where learners are also taken on a site visit to see health and safety measures in action. Off-the-job training includes well-managed and interesting sessions on a range of health and safety topics. CEL reinforces these very effectively in formal progress reviews, where it asks relevant questions to further develop learners' understanding. CEL's staff also receive 'toolbox talks' based on real incidents in the company and all young learners wear red tee shirts on site to identify them as inexperienced workers.

91. The practical workshop is satisfactory and there is a good supply of consumable resources and up-to-date industry testing equipment. The practical workshop is being extended and the centre also has its own achievement measurement testing centre. Handouts and other learning resources are high quality and adapted to the requirements of different learners. For example, CEL employs a graphic designer who uses pictures from

learners' workplaces to include in the off-the-job training resources.

92. All teaching and learning observed was satisfactory or better. In the best sessions, learning was very well managed with high levels of learner involvement. This included learners evaluating each other's views and levels of understanding. A minority of sessions were not adequately structured to meet all learners' needs. Tutors dominated some sessions and did not engage the learners. The stated outcomes for these sessions focused on the tutors, not the learners. Attendance at off-the-job training is very high. During the inspection, 97 per cent of learners were in attendance in observed sessions.

93. The assessment process is satisfactory. Learners are clear on the process, including the appeals procedure. Assessment records are clear and record judgements accurately. However, the judgements of assessors under training are not yet sufficiently accurate and the monitoring of their performance is not sufficiently detailed. In one assessment observed on site, the assessor made good use of questioning to check the learners' background knowledge and gave detailed feedback on the assessment outcomes. There is satisfactory use of assessment of learners' performance by direct observation in the workplace. Workplace supervisors are not adequately involved in some assessment processes.

94. The identification of additional learning needs and provision of support are satisfactory. All learners are assessed for their literacy and numeracy skills and preferred learning style, at the start of their programmes. The results of these assessments are fed back verbally to learners and used effectively to identify those with support needs. Learners are also given tasks to develop their range of learning styles, and teaching approaches are differentiated to include an appropriate range of styles. Twenty learners had identified support needs at the time of inspection, of whom 17 were being supported effectively for their numeracy and literacy needs. This includes whole-day sessions with the key skills tutor in preparation for externally set examinations. However, three learners with identified dyslexia support needs were not receiving adequate support. CEL is aware of this issue and is taking appropriate measures to access specialist support for these learners.

95. Some learners' progress reviews are weak. Targets are often vague, without clear measurable outcomes. There are insufficient short-, medium- and long-term targets. Targets are not sufficiently detailed to ensure that learners understand what on-site evidence they need to collect. The monitoring of learners' progress on site is delayed at the start of the learning programme. At the time of inspection there were no individual learning plans in place for learners who had started in September and on-site reviews were only just beginning to take place. Workplace supervisors are not sufficiently involved in the learners' progress reviews. They are not fully aware of learners' progress on all aspects of the apprenticeship framework. They are not adequately aware of the targets set for learners and workplace training is not always planned to meet the needs of learners in producing evidence for the NVQ. Judgements on learners' attitude and ability in the workplace are made during reviews but workplace supervisors are often not consulted. Workplace supervisors do not receive a copy of the progress reviews. For some learners, too many progress reviews take place at CEL's training centre.

Leadership and management

96. CEL manages the training programme very effectively. Managers set a clear direction that has led to continual improvements in the quality of training offered. Team meetings

are focused on quality improvement and the needs of learners. CEL's staff have effective links with employers that ensure the curriculum is changed and updated to meet their needs. There has been significant investment in resources and clear plans to improve the practical training area to meet the increased number of learners now in training. The self-assessment process is thorough and involves staff at all levels in the company. Staff are experienced and satisfactorily qualified or are working towards the relevant assessor or tutor qualifications. Equality of opportunity is covered during induction but is not reinforced effectively during the learning programme.

