

# Clarkson Evans Ltd

## Inspection report

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**Unique reference number:** 51192

**Name of lead inspector:** Bob Cowdrey HMI

**Last day of inspection:** 11 December 2009

**Type of provider:** Independent learning provider  
Clarkson Evans Ltd

**Address:** Meteor Business Park  
Cheltenham Road East  
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**Telephone number:** 01452 858170

## Information about 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 has chosen not to be assessed against the Training Quality Standard (TQS) but continues to use the CoVE training resources. 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, including the technical certificate and key skills requirement of the advanced apprenticeship framework, takes place at CEL's training centre in Gloucester, primarily on a day-release basis.
2. Work-based learning is funded by Gloucestershire Learning and Skills Council (LSC). This includes advanced apprentices for other employers. CEL offers commercial training in a range of specialist electrical installation topics, including inspection, testing and the electrical installation regulations. Commercial training accounts for approximately 50% of CEL's income.
3. CEL employs a manager, a head of electrical training, four lecturers, three assessors, a workshop technician and a small team of administration staff. The training director has recently left the company and the training centre manager is currently on maternity leave. The training centre and training provision is managed on a day-to-day basis by the head of electrical training.
4. At the time of the inspection, Clarkson Evans had 125 funded learners on advanced apprenticeship programmes, and nine on programme-led apprenticeships.

Type of provision	Number of learners in 2007/08 (previous year)
<b>Employer provision:</b> Advanced apprenticeships Programme-led apprenticeships	163 advanced apprentices 9 apprentices

## Summary report

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

Overall effectiveness of provision		Grade 2
Capacity to improve		Grade 2
		Grade
Outcomes for learners		1
Quality of provision		2
Leadership and management		2
Safeguarding		3
Equality and diversity		3
Subject areas		Grade
Construction, planning and the built environment (electrotechnical)		2

## Overall effectiveness

5. The overall effectiveness of CEL is good. Senior staff provide strong leadership and good management. Over the last two years, CEL has improved arrangements for initial assessment, key skills delivery and technical certificates. The practical training has been adapted and provides a more effective and flexible programme which fully meets the needs of CEL and other employers. Well-managed and -planned timetables ensure that resources are fully utilised for both work-based learning and commercial training purposes. Few apprentices were recruited to CEL in 2008/09 because of the decline in construction work. Success rates for advanced apprentices are now outstanding. Since the previous inspection in 2005, the company has continued to improve its overall and timely framework success rates.
6. Learners thoroughly enjoy their practical training and are motivated well. Learners develop very high standards of work skills and apply these effectively. Some learners become team leaders, often within two years of finishing their apprenticeships.
7. Practical training is very good and assessment is satisfactory. Arrangements for the learners with additional learning support needs are good but at the time of inspection there were no learners identified with additional learning support

needs. The range of programmes meets employers' and learners' needs extremely well. Learners are supported well and feel safe. Safeguarding is satisfactory. However, not all employers and learners know who safeguarding contacts are at CEL. Learners' review of progress is poor. Despite recent changes to the documentation, some reviews still lack sufficient detail and target setting remains vague. This was identified as an area for improvement at the previous inspection but insufficient progress has been made in this aspect. The company's approach to equality and diversity is satisfactory but further equality and diversity and safeguarding training is needed. Leadership and management have demonstrated they can improve their provision and have a good capacity to continue doing so.

## Main findings

- Overall outcomes are outstanding. Since the previous inspection in 2005, overall framework success rates have steadily improved from 78% in 2005/06 to 94% in 2008/09, significantly above the national average of 73% for 2008/09. Similarly, timely success rates have improved from 54% in 2005/06 to 75% in 2008/09, significantly above the low national average of 33% for 2008/09.
- Learners are well motivated and enjoy the training. Attendance on courses provided in the training centre is very high at over 94%. Learners are always punctual and keen to start sessions.
- At induction, CEL provides learners with an accredited first aid course and training in manual handling. Employers can enrol learners on additional accredited training through the CEL's commercial courses. These courses are also offered at discounted prices to apprentices when they finish their programme.
- The company provides very effective training at its training centre. Courses are very well organised and managed to meet learners' and employers' needs. The training centre offers excellent facilities and resources which reflect the commercial world. They include a purpose-built house with well-developed fault-finding scenarios in a real working environment.
- Teaching, training and learning are good or better. Information and learning technology (ILT) is used particularly well and learners have good access to an internet-based resource, which provides links to learning materials on national sites.
- The successful Pathway-led Apprenticeship programme provides learners with good progression to the advanced apprenticeship programme. Learners have the opportunity to gain a technical certificate and key skills during their full-time programme.
- Learners are supported well by CEL staff and other employers. Assessors work well with learners and employers to maximise opportunities for assessment. Assessment practices are satisfactory. The recent introduction of e-portfolios has been well received and is proving successful in improving progress through national vocational qualifications (NVQs). However, few employers currently use the e-portfolio.

- Learners feel safe in the training centre and in the workplace and clearly understand their rights and responsibilities. However, learners and external employers are unaware of the person in CEL responsible for safeguarding. Arrangements for safeguarding for learners are satisfactory. However, further safeguarding training is needed.
- Clarkson Evans successfully promotes electrical training to women and the number of female apprentices has increased since the previous inspection. The company has been successful in recruiting learners from minority ethnic groups in Birmingham, but despite good work has been less successful in Gloucester. However, insufficient use is made of data to measure key trends in performance of different groups of learners to establish challenging targets. Staff training in equality and diversity requires updating.
- Learners' reviews are poor and do not provide sufficient detail about learners' progress through all aspects of their programme. Target setting is restricted to the NVQ qualification and insufficient attention is paid to health and safety and equality and diversity. Employers other than CEL are not always involved in learners' reviews.
- Clarkson Evans's procedures for evaluating and improving its programmes are satisfactory. The company has a clear understanding of its current position and most of the areas for improvement identified by inspectors, but the development plan lacks clear and challenging targets for improvement.
- Some quality assurance processes need further work to ensure that all appropriate activities are monitored for continuous improvement.

### **What does CEL need to do to improve further?**

- Nominate a senior member of staff as a designated person responsible for safeguarding and ensure learners and employers are aware of the designated person. Provide training in safeguarding for staff, employers and learners to ensure that safeguarding learners is a priority.
- Provide further training in equality and diversity for learners, staff and employers to ensure they are aware of current legislation and implications and thus provide sufficient information to protect learners.
- Further improve the learner review process to ensure that learners' progress is monitored more effectively. Short-and medium-term target setting should be improved to enable learners to progress through their programme appropriately.
- Improve employer awareness and use of the e-portfolio process. This will enable employers to further support learners and help them progress through their frameworks.
- Improve use of data to measure key trends in performance of different groups of learners and establish challenging targets for improvement to enable further improvement in the provision offered by CEL.

## **Summary of the views of users as confirmed by inspectors**

### **What learners like:**

- the well-organised training
- knowledge and experience of CEL tutors and assessors
- being respected and treated like adults
- the good facilities and lesson notes
- getting a lot out of lessons
- the way that staff use their experience in their teaching to help explain things.

### **What learners would like to see improved:**

- providing more variety in lessons rather than just PowerPoint presentations
- starting times with later starts – too much traffic congestion to get here at 0815 hours
- providing more practical lessons
- more recreational facilities at the training centre.

### **What employers like:**

- the very good quality service provided by CEL
- the excellent training facilities
- information provided about new training courses
- very high standards of learners' work.

### **What employers would like to see improved:**

- more involvement in the learner review process.

## Main inspection report

### Capacity to make and sustain improvement

### Grade 2

8. CEL has implemented several well-planned improvements since the previous inspection. CEL has made a significant investment by expanding the capacity of its training facilities to include additional workshops, classrooms and their simulated diagnostic testing purpose built house. The company has improved its initial assessment process, introduced a programme-led apprenticeship programme, further developed key skills learning and made flexible training arrangements to further meet employers' needs. The company has also recently successfully introduced e-portfolios. This has significantly improved learners' progress through their NVQ and enabled more accurate monitoring of progress by CEL staff. Overall achievement of apprenticeship frameworks has improved substantially since 2005 and is now outstanding. The majority of learners achieve within agreed timescales. Current learners are progressing very well through their frameworks. Those learners on the Programme-led Apprenticeship programme introduced in 2008 are making good progress towards their learning outcomes: key skills; technical certificate. Of the nine starters in 2008, five have completed their learning goals and two have progressed on to advanced apprenticeship programmes.
9. Self-assessment is used effectively to identify strengths and areas for development to improve the provision. Learners' and employers' views are considered in the process. The self-assessment report identifies accurately the strengths and areas for improvement and links well to the improvement plan. Progress is monitored sufficiently, but specific targets and indicators for success are not clearly identified. The approach to monitoring the quality of training and assessment is satisfactory but some aspects such as the learner review process and teaching are not fully developed.

### Outcomes for learners

### Grade 1

10. Overall outcomes for learners are outstanding. Overall and timely framework success rates are outstanding. Since the previous inspection in 2005, overall framework success rates have steadily improved from 78% in 2005/06 to 94% in 2008/09, significantly above the national average of 73% for 2008/09. Similarly, timely success rates have improved from 54% in 2005/06 to 75% in 2008/09, significantly above the low national average of 33% for 2008/09. Key skills success rates are also outstanding. All learners have succeeded in their key skills assessments. Achievement of qualifications for the few learners on Programme-led Apprenticeships in 2008/09 is good and a small number of these learners have progressed onto the advanced apprenticeship programme.
11. In both the workplace and training centre, learners demonstrate good standards of work and undertake tasks with confidence. A number of learners quickly progress to team leader positions with CEL. NVQ and key skills portfolios

are of a good standard. Learners are well motivated and enjoy their training. Attendance rates are very high.

12. Learners feel safe in the workplace and demonstrate safe working practices. They have a thorough understanding of health and safety, including accident reporting procedures, the checking of electrical equipment prior to use and the hazards and risks prevalent on construction sites such as moving plant and machinery. All learners achieve a first aid qualification and are trained in manual handling. The training centre's cafe provides healthy eating options.

## **The quality of provision**

## **Grade 2**

13. The quality of provision is good. Recruitment and selection is thorough and effectively informs programme planning. Teaching and learning are good. Lesson plans are produced centrally to ensure a consistent approach to teaching and training. Tutors effectively use information learning technology and live demonstration boards to engage learners. Learners value the expertise of teaching staff and the guidance and learning support they receive. Learners make a positive contribution to their own learning and benefit from sharing their knowledge and work experiences with their peers.
14. Training facilities and resources are excellent and effectively meet learners' and employers' needs. Training rooms and workshops are particularly well equipped and contain a wide range of electrical testing rigs, including resistors and information learning technology resources. A purpose-built house provides excellent training and assessment opportunities on electrical fault finding and testing which encompasses a working central heating system. In workshop sessions, learners work on a wide range of resources, including circuit boards and electrical installations that simulate different forms of surfaces and construction of walls, floors and ceilings. A well- equipped and dedicated computer room and electronic support materials enable learners to prepare for key skills and technical tests. An electronic portfolio is used effectively by most learners to submit NVQ evidence and by assessors to track and monitor progress and set development actions. However, few employers currently use the portfolio.
15. Assessment and internal verification are satisfactory. Assessors clearly explain the purpose of assessment and learners confirm their understanding. During assessment, assessors remain unobtrusive and use verbal questioning well to check learners' understanding. However, feedback to learners on their performance and what they need to do next sometimes lacks clarity. Assessment and internal verification records are detailed.
16. Learner progress reviews are poor. Target setting is inconsistent. In the better reviews, targets are time bound and clearly inform learners what they have to do to support progress. However, in other reviews, targets are not evident and there is insufficient recording of apprentices' progress against targets previously agreed. In recent reviews, the coverage of equality and diversity and health and safety is insufficient to ensure apprentices' full understanding. Employers



are not always directly involved in the review process and some reviews are not completed on time.

17. The use of partnerships to develop the provision is good. Effective partnerships with employers ensure that learners receive relevant experience in the workplace.
18. The range of programmes is outstanding and meets the needs of apprentices and employers effectively. Clear progression opportunities from Programme-led Apprenticeships to the advanced apprenticeship programme are in place. CEL provides all trade-specific tests and update training to ensure both apprentices and employers fully comply with industry requirements.
19. Care, guidance and support are good. Many of the electricians, supervisors and technical staff of CEL's contracting company are ex-CEL-trained apprentices who have progressed into their current roles. They provide good support and guidance to learners in the workplace. Learners access good support materials to strengthen their understanding of qualification requirements and assessors enhance this with useful advice and guidance on collating NVQ evidence using the electronic portfolio.

## Leadership and management

## Grade 2

20. CEL has very clear strategies to develop the organisation and a strong focus on meeting employers' and learners' needs. CEL's leadership is strong and training is very well managed. Approximately 60% of apprentices are employed by CEL, the remaining 40% by other employers.
21. All staff work well together and internal communications are good. The head of electrical training continues to play a key role in working with awarding bodies and the skills sector to develop standards for electrotechnical training. All staff have or are working towards appropriate teaching/training and assessor qualifications. CEL provides accredited training for assessors and internal verifiers. Employer engagement is particularly good, but CEL recognise the need for further development about e-portfolios and promoting equality and diversity.
22. CEL's arrangements for equality and diversity are satisfactory. Overall, there is satisfactory promotion of equality and diversity. The promotion of electrical training courses to women is good. Success is very well celebrated in the company magazine, which often prominently features achievements of young female learners and learners from minority ethnic groups. Marketing and learning materials are carefully designed to guard against discrimination and to encourage women and minority ethnic groups. There are now four women apprentices, compared with one at the previous inspection. The number of apprentices from minority ethnic groups in Birmingham reflects the population, but despite good work with community groups in the south, recruitment remains below population levels. Staff regularly attend local recruitment events and good use is made of learners as ambassadors. Learners also provide well-

organised guided tours of the training centre. Adequate checks are made of employers to make sure they promote equality of opportunities effectively.

23. The company has clear policies for equality and diversity that have been recently reviewed and updated. Unaided access to the training centre for those with restricted mobility is limited, although suitable arrangements are made for learners where required. Adequate reinforcement of equality and diversity is given to learners at induction but their knowledge and understanding is not regularly reinforced through the review process. The staff's understanding of equality of opportunity is satisfactory but requires additional updating concerning current legislative requirements. Data on different groups of learners are collected and analysed, and this information is adequately utilised to inform management decisions and ensure learners from different groups are not disadvantaged. However, the analysis of participation and achievement by minority ethnic groups across the different regions of provision requires further development.
24. CEL's safeguarding arrangements are satisfactory. All staff involved directly with learners have completed a Criminal Records Bureau (CRB) check. CEL has not clearly identified a senior member of staff responsible for safeguarding, and employers and learners are unsure of who to contact at CEL if safeguarding issues arise. There are thorough and regular checks made of employers to ensure learners are safe. The CEL health and safety manager provides good support to employers and learners and often provides training on health and safety topics, including accident prevention and risk assessment in the workplace. CEL staff have not yet received suitable training on child protection. CEL is aware of the need to make appropriate preparation to implement vetting and barring procedures required by the Independent Safeguarding Authority.
25. Self-assessment is good. The latest report closely matches the findings of the inspection and is linked clearly to a development/improvement plan. The views of stakeholders are used effectively to inform the self-assessment report. Staff have a clear understanding of the self-assessment process. Learners' views are sought through focus groups and learners receive feedback on the outcomes of these or changes CEL has made as a result of their views. Target setting for improvement with clear indicators for success requires further development.
26. Value for money is good. Outcomes for learners have improved significantly since 2005. The improved delivery of key skills and technical certificates is good and effective. The recent implementation of the e-portfolio has been well received by learners and employers and is already improving evidence gathering for the NVQ and monitoring of learners' performance.
27. Processes for monitoring and improving the quality of teaching, training and learning and the review process require attention and further development. Observation of teaching, training and learning was carried out early in 2009 but feedback to staff did not always provide sufficient information about areas for improvement. Although learner review documentation has been recently

changed, the learner review process has not been formally observed as a means of informing quality improvement.

## **Information about the inspection**

28. One of Her Majesty's Inspectors (HMI) and two additional inspectors, assisted by the provider's work-based head of electrical training, as nominee, carried out the inspection. Inspectors also took account of the provider's most recent self-assessment report and development plans, comments from the local LSC and other funding bodies, the previous inspection report and data on learners and their achievement over the period since the previous inspection.
29. Inspectors used group and individual interviews, telephone calls and emails to gather the views of learners. They looked at questionnaires learners and employers had completed on behalf of the provider. They also visited learning sessions, assessments and progress reviews. Inspectors collected evidence from programmes in the subject area the provider offers.

## Record of Main Findings (RMF)

## Clarkson Evans Ltd

**Learning types: 14–16:** Young apprenticeships; Diplomas; **16–18 Learner responsive:** FE full-time and part-time courses, Foundation learning tier, including E2E); **19+ responsive:** FE full- and part-time courses; **Employer responsive:** Train to Gain, apprenticeships

Grades <b>using the 4 point scale</b> 1: Outstanding; 2: Good; 3: Satisfactory; 4: Inadequate	Overall	14–16	16–18 Learner responsive	19+ Learner responsive	Employer responsive
<b>Approximate number of enrolled learners</b>					
Full-time learners	134				134
Part-time learners					
<b>Overall effectiveness</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>n/a</b>	<b>n/a</b>	<b>n/a</b>	<b>n/a</b>
<b>Capacity to improve</b>	<b>2</b>				
<b>Outcomes for learners</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>n/a</b>	<b>n/a</b>	<b>n/a</b>	<b>1</b>
How well do learners achieve and enjoy their learning?	1				
How well do learners attain their learning goals?	1				
How well do learners progress?	1				
How well do learners improve their economic and social well-being through learning and development?	2				
How safe do learners feel?	2				
<i>Are learners able to make informed choices about their own health and well being?*</i>	2				
<i>How well do learners make a positive contribution to the community?*</i>	1				
<b>Quality of provision</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>n/a</b>	<b>n/a</b>	<b>n/a</b>	<b>2</b>
How effectively do teaching, training and assessment support learning and development?	2				
How effectively does the provision meet the needs and interests of users?	1				
How well partnerships with schools, employers, community groups and others lead to benefits for learners?	2				
How effective are the care, guidance and support learners receive in helping them to achieve?	2				
<b>Leadership and management</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>n/a</b>	<b>n/a</b>	<b>n/a</b>	<b>2</b>
How effectively do leaders and managers raise expectations and promote ambition throughout the organisation?	2				
<i>How effectively do governors and supervisory bodies provide leadership, direction and challenge?*</i>	n/a				
How effectively does the provider promote the safeguarding of learners?	3				
How effectively does the provider actively promote equality and diversity, tackle discrimination and narrow the achievement gap?	3				
How effectively does the provider engage with users to support and promote improvement?	2				
How effectively does self-assessment improve the quality of the provision and outcomes for learners?	2				
How efficiently and effectively does the provider use its available resources to secure value for money?	2				

\*where applicable to the type of provision

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