

Skills for Security Ltd

Inspection date

26 July 2007

Inspection number

300753

Contents

Background information	3
Inspection judgements	3
Scope of the inspection.....	3
Description of the provider.....	4
Summary of grades awarded	5
Overall judgement.....	6
Effectiveness of provision	6
Capacity to improve	6
Key strengths	6
Key areas for improvement.....	6
Main findings	7
Achievement and standards	7
Quality of provision.....	7
Leadership and management	8
Equality of opportunity	8
What learners like	11
What learners think could improve.....	11
Learners' achievements	12

Background information

Inspection judgements

Inspectors use a four-point scale to summarise their judgements about achievement and standards, the quality of provision, and leadership and management, which includes a grade for equality of opportunity.

Key for inspection grades

Grade 1	Outstanding
Grade 2	Good
Grade 3	Satisfactory
Grade 4	Inadequate

Further information can be found on how inspection judgements are made on www.ofsted.gov.uk.

Scope of the inspection

In deciding the scope of the inspection, inspectors take account of the provider's most recent self-assessment report and development plans, and comments from the local Learning and Skills Council (LSC) or other funding body. Where appropriate, inspectors also consider the previous inspection report (www.ofsted.gov.uk), reports from the inspectorates' quality monitoring or annual assessment visits, and data on learners and their achievements over the period since the previous inspection.

In addition to reporting on overall effectiveness of the organisation, its capacity to improve further, achievement and standards, quality of provision and leadership and management, this inspection focused on specialist provision in:

- Construction, planning and the built environment.

Description of the provider

1. Established in 2006, Skills for Security Ltd is the Standards Setting Body for the security industry. The skills and apprenticeships department, part of the research and development directorate, develops the apprenticeship schemes for the security sectors in England and Wales.
2. Skills for Security train apprentices, advanced apprentices and Train to Gain learners working towards national vocational qualifications (NVQs) in construction.
3. Skills for Security are based in Worcester and provide training in six regional training co-operatives throughout the United Kingdom. Each co-operative consists of employers, a Skills for Security representative and subcontracted training providers. The separate regional co-operatives are: West London, the Southeast, Wales and the Southwest, the Midlands, Yorkshire, and the Northwest. Skills for Security fund training provision through the London East LSC. All of the learners are recruited by employers and then trained at the relevant regional centre.
4. There are five full-time members of staff. The training programmes are managed by manager skills and apprenticeships who is responsible to the director of research and development. An apprenticeship supervisor and co-ordinator also assist in the management of training. Two administrators support the department. Assessment and progress reviews are carried out by a team of 14 subcontracted assessors.
5. At the time of the inspection there are 239 learners. Of these, 102 are advanced apprentices, 127 are apprentices and 10 are on Train to Gain programmes working towards NVQs at Level 2. Apprentices attend one of five colleges, or a subcontracted private provider for the off-the-job training on day, or block release, and to study key skills. The remainder of their time is spent in the workplace working towards their NVQ at either Level 2 or 3. Train to Gain learners receive all training and assessment in the workplace.
6. All learners are employed. Employers recruit learners and then refer them to Skills for Security for induction onto their training programme.

Summary of grades awarded

Effectiveness of provision	Satisfactory : Grade 3
Capacity to improve	Satisfactory : Grade 3
Achievement and standards	Satisfactory : Grade 3
Quality of provision	Satisfactory : Grade 3
Leadership and management	Satisfactory : Grade 3
Equality of opportunity	Contributory grade: Inadequate : Grade 4

Sector subject area

Construction, planning and the built environment; Building services.	Satisfactory : Grade 3
---	-------------------------------

Overall judgement

Effectiveness of provision

Satisfactory : Grade 3

7. The overall effectiveness of the provision is satisfactory. Achievement and standards, the quality of the provision and leadership and management are satisfactory. Provision in construction, planning and the built environment is also satisfactory. Equality of opportunity is inadequate.

Capacity to improve

Satisfactory : Grade 3

8. Skills for Security has a satisfactory capacity to improve. Since the previous inspection, learners' success rates have improved significantly and are now satisfactory. The provider responds rapidly to make improvements when issues are identified. However, quality improvement arrangements are insufficiently systematic to effectively support continuous improvement. Some of the areas for improvement identified in previous inspections have yet to be addressed.
9. The inspection team found the self-assessment process to be sufficiently inclusive of staff, learners', sub contractors' and employers' views. However, neither the 2006 nor the 2007 self-assessment reports contain an appropriate development plan. There has been no formal identification of the specific actions needed to bring about the improvements. The self-assessment report is overly discursive and insufficiently judgemental. Many of the strengths, but few of the weaknesses identified by inspectors are covered in the 2007 report.

Key strengths

- Significantly improved success rates.
- Good on-the-job training.
- Good working with external partners to develop the provision.
- Very effective strategies to improve success rates.

Key areas for improvement

- Slow progress by some learners.
- The ineffectiveness of progress reviews.
- Insufficient analysis and use of data.
- The insufficient systematic quality improvement of the provision.
- Insufficient promotion and reinforcement of equality of opportunity.

Main findings

Achievement and standards

Satisfactory : Grade 3

10. Success rates have significantly improved as recognised in the self-assessment report. The success rate for apprentices in 2003/04 was 19%; this improved steadily in 2004/05 and 2005/06 to 37% and 66% respectively. For the same period, success rates for advanced apprentices have also improved from 18% to 68%. The provider's own data indicates that the rates are continuing to improve in the current year. No Train to Gain learners who have started training in the current year have yet to reach the end of their planned training programme.
11. The standard of learners' practical work is good. Many learners work with the minimum of supervision. Learners are making good progress towards their key skills. Portfolio-building is carried out on an electronic system which learners may access from their home computers. However, many learners are not familiar with the system. There is an over reliance on assessors to record the evidence provided by learners.
12. Some learners are making slow progress completing their NVQ. Currently, 42% of apprentices and 5% of advanced apprentices have already exceeded their planned training duration.
13. Opportunities are missed to collect evidence in the workplace. Insufficient use is made of all evidence produced during on-the-job activities, for example the use of expert witness testimony. Some assessors rely too much on direct observation as the sole means of assessment. Learners do not collect evidence for their NVQ Level 3 early in the programme, despite the relevant range of work tasks which they complete.

Quality of provision

Satisfactory: Grade 3

14. On-the-job training is good. Learners carry out a wide range of security-related activities. Qualified and experienced security engineers supervise learners. They give good technical training, advice and support. Many employers have dedicated training rooms where learners are taught about specific system control panels before working with them on site. Learners are allowed to work with the minimum of supervision on security installations and repair servicing of systems.
15. Employers are supportive of training. Some take great care to ensure that learners develop their practical skills to a high standard and that they cover the NVQ requirements. For example, one employer has devised a detailed planning system for the on-the-job training which is discussed with learners and updated monthly. Learners are highly motivated by the interest and involvement of managers and employers. These learners progress through their framework at a good pace.
16. Reviews of learners' progress are ineffective. Targets agreed during formal progress reviews do not cover all aspects of the framework and in most cases concentrate solely

on the NVQ. They do not always link to the tasks that are carried out in the workplace, and rarely refer to progress towards the technical certificate or key skills. Employers are not routinely involved in target-setting or the review process. It is difficult to co-ordinate on- and off-the-job training. Learners' understanding of equal opportunities is checked insufficiently. Little use is made of milestones to measure learners' progress. Individual learning plans are not updated with the result of progress reviews.

17. NVQ assessment is satisfactory. All learners complete an initial assessment of their literacy and numeracy skills at the start of the programme. Assessors frequently visit the workplace to carry out on-the-job assessment by observing the learners carrying out practical tasks.
18. Attention to health and safety is appropriate. Health and safety is introduced at induction and satisfactorily reinforced during progress reviews. Assessors select relevant topics for discussion from a list of predetermined questions.
19. Skills for Security offers programmes which appropriately meet the specialist needs of the security industry. They adequately meet the needs of employers, learners and the communities in which they operate.
20. Support for learners is satisfactory. Assessors visit the workplace every eight weeks, or more frequently if required. They also visit the colleges when learners are attending. Appropriate additional support for literacy and numeracy is provided by the individual subcontractors.
21. Most learners have assessors' telephone numbers and can contact them at any time. Employers are generally very supportive of training and communications are good between assessors, learners and employers.

Leadership and management

Satisfactory : Grade 3

Equality of opportunity

Contributory grade: Inadequate : Grade 4

22. Work with partners to develop the provision is good, as recognised in the self-assessment report. The provider successfully leads a network of regional employer groups and colleges to develop the apprenticeship frameworks and improve programme delivery. Employers generally have a good understanding of the frameworks and provide good opportunities for on-the-job training. Some employers act as expert witnesses to accelerate collection of relevant evidence in the workplace.
23. Skills for Security have established service level agreements with subcontractors, which include reporting and monitoring of the quality of training. The apprenticeship supervisor observes some off-the-job training for apprentices and provides feedback to tutors.
24. Very effective strategies are used to improve apprenticeship success rates. Apprenticeship success rates have increased significantly since the previous inspection.

The provider works closely with each subcontractor. Termly meetings are held to discuss the progress of individual learners, identify issues and plan effective solutions. A useful bonus scheme for assessors has been introduced to encourage timely success by apprentices.

25. Programmes have been revised to include the earlier delivery of key skills. Most subcontractors' achievement rates in key skill and technical certificate examinations have improved. Where key skills achievements remained low in one subcontracted college in the Bristol area the provider withdrew from the contract and now works with a private provider across the Southwest.
26. Insufficient analysis and use is made of available data. The provider has an appropriate management information system, which is populated with a wide range of data. However, there is an over-reliance on the informal, intimate knowledge of individual learners by staff. Few regular reports are produced to inform management decisions. Little analysis is made of available data to identify trends in performance and set targets for improvement.
27. Insufficient promotion and reinforcement of equality of opportunities is carried out. This area for improvement was not recognised in the self-assessment report. All learners and employers receive an information pack that contains useful information about the apprenticeship programme, including health and safety, equal opportunities and personal harassment policies. Employers are encouraged to adopt Skills for Security's policies. However, Skills for Security's equal opportunities policy has not been reviewed since 2003 and does not refer to all current relevant legislation.
28. Learners receive some equal opportunities training during induction but there is little reinforcement during reviews. Learners demonstrate little understanding of equal opportunities issues. Assessors have responsibility for their own professional development. However, not all have attended recent relevant update training on equality and diversity issues.
29. Skills for Security are aware of the under representation of females and learners from minority ethnic groups on their programmes. However, there is no clear strategy to address this imbalance. Marketing materials have recently been reviewed and now include a wider range of images of under-represented groups.
30. Quality improvement procedures are not systematic and are inconsistently applied. This area for improvement was not recognised in the self-assessment report. Inspectors found inconsistencies in assessors' practice. Much internal verification is carried out. An internal verification strategy and sampling plans have yet to be developed for the recently revised NVQ. Arrangements to improve the quality of all parts of the provision are under-developed. The results of the informal systems which are used are inadequately recorded. Managers rely on an overall impression of the programme and the identification of issues by subcontractors. Reports from subcontractors vary in quality and frequency. Some reports are missing. Feedback is regularly collected from learners. However, the analysis of feedback is insufficiently rigorous to accurately identify quality improvement issues.

31. All assessors are required to attend a yearly assessor meeting. Assessors are self-employed and are not always able to attend this meeting. There are few further opportunities for assessors to meet and share good practice.

What learners like

- Very enjoyable training over the whole three years.
- Good support from individual assessors.
- Good support from employers.
- Gaining a valuable qualification.

What learners think could improve

- 'More practical work at college please'.
- Offering off-the-job training closer to home.

Annex

Learners' achievements

Success rates on **work-based learning 'apprenticeship' programmes** managed by the provider 2004 year to 2006 year

Programme	End Year	Success rate	No. of learners*	Provider/c college NVQ rate**	National NVQ rate**	Provider/college framework rate**	National framework rate**
Advanced Apprenticeships	03-04	overall	62	23	48	18	31
		timely	63	3	30	3	19
	04-05	overall	52	50	48	37	34
		timely	40	18	31	5	21
	05-06	overall	29	72	53	66	44
		timely	29	45	34	38	27
Apprenticeships	03-04	overall	26	23	47	19	32
		timely	32	9	24	9	16
	04-05	overall	20	80	50	65	39
		timely	39	23	29	13	22
	05-06	overall	79	76	58	68	52
		timely	71	28	38	13	34

* Learners who leave later than originally planned are counted in the year they actually leave. This group of learners are then added to the learners who planned to complete in a given year and did so or left earlier than planned

** College and national qualification success rates are calculated using LSC published data derived from the 'Individual Learning Record'