

# INSPECTION REPORT

## **Insulation & Environmental Training Agency**

03 September 2001



ADULT LEARNING  
INSPECTORATE

## Grading

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

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

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

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

The two grading scales relate to each other as follows:

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

## Adult Learning Inspectorate

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

- work-based training for all people over 16
- provision in further education colleges for people aged 19 and over
- the University for Industry's *learnirect* provision
- adult and community learning
- training given by the Employment Service under the New Deals.

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

## Inadequate provision

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

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

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

## SUMMARY

### The provider

The Insulation and Environmental Training Agency is the training division of the Thermal Insulation Contractors' Association. Its head office, administrative centre and training centre are in Darlington, County Durham. It is the sole provider nationally of work-based learning for young people working towards national vocational qualifications (NVQs) in thermal insulation, which lies within the occupational area of construction. There are currently 61 foundation modern apprentices. Twenty-seven are in the first year of training and 34 in the second year. All of the learners are employed.

### Overall judgement

The quality of the provision is not adequate to meet the reasonable needs of those receiving it. Work-based learning for young people is unsatisfactory. The leadership and management of the Insulation and Environmental Training Agency are also unsatisfactory.

### Work-based learning for young people

Foundation modern apprenticeship training started in 1999-2000. None of the learners has yet completed the full framework. Retention rates are high. Achievement rates for NVQs before the introduction of foundation modern apprenticeships were satisfactory. All learners receive off-the-job training at the training centre in Darlington. The training centre is well resourced and provides a realistic working environment. Work placements are exceptionally good and provide learners with opportunities to learn a wide range of tasks. However, employers have a poor understanding of the foundation modern apprenticeship framework and of NVQs. There is insufficient planning of both on- and off-the-job training. Arrangements for initial assessment and the assessment of NVQs are weak. Learners' progress reviews are not always thorough and are not carried out in the same way by all training officers.

### Leadership and management

The Insulation and Environmental Training Agency's leadership and management are unsatisfactory. Members of the Thermal Insulation Contractors' Association provide the Insulation and Environmental Training Agency with good support. The agency's move to new premises in Darlington was well planned. On- and off-the-job training are not sufficiently co-ordinated. Arrangements for the recruitment, appraisal and training of staff are inadequate. There is insufficient training in equality of opportunity both for learners and staff. Equality of opportunity is not adequately promoted or monitored. Arrangements for internal and external verification of

NVQs are poor, as are the policy and procedures for quality assurance.

## GRADES

Construction	4
Contributory grades:	
Work-based learning for young people	4

Leadership and management	4
Contributory grades:	
Equality of opportunity	4
Quality assurance	5

## KEY STRENGTHS

- exceptionally good work placements
- high retention rates
- good support from member companies

## KEY WEAKNESSES

- inconsistent reviews of learners' progress
- poor arrangements for providing key skills
- inadequate initial assessment
- insufficient co-ordination of on- and off-the-job training
- inadequate monitoring and promotion of equality of opportunity
- poor arrangements for internal and external verification
- poor quality assurance policy and procedures

## OTHER IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED

- more detailed target-setting for learners
- better communication with workplace supervisors
- clearer strategic planning
- more effective use of feedback
- better use of management information

## THE PROVIDER AND ITS CONTEXT

1. The Insulation and Environmental Training Agency (IETA) was established in 1990 when the Thermal Insulation Contractors' Association (TICA) ended its arrangement with the Construction Industry Training Board for managing training. The agency has a contract with the National Training Partnership (NTP) on behalf of the Learning and Skills Council (LSC) to provide training for foundation modern apprentices. IETA currently has 61 foundation modern apprentices on publicly-funded programmes based in the Northeast, Northwest and the Midlands. All off-the-job training and assessment is carried out in the training centre in Darlington. On-the-job training is provided by employers in the regions where the learners live. IETA employs three training officers with regional responsibilities, a full-time instructor and assessor, a part-time instructor and assessor, and a training administrator. All staff report to the chief executive of IETA.

2. IETA covers areas with widely varying rates of achievement by school leavers. In 2000, the proportion of school leavers achieving five or more general certificates of education (GCSEs) at grade C and above varied from 48.7 per cent in the Wirral to 34.6 per cent in Middlesbrough, compared with the national average of 49.2 per cent. The proportion of the population from minority ethnic groups also varies widely across the areas in which IETA operates. It ranges from 1.4 per cent in the Northeast to 8.2 per cent in the East Midlands, compared with the national average of 6.2 per cent. The rate of unemployment varied from 3.1 per cent in the East Midlands to 5.3 per cent in the Northeast, compared with a national average for June 2001 of 3 per cent.

## THE INSPECTION

3. Four inspectors spent a total of 16 days with IETA in September 2001. They visited 11 employers' sites and interviewed 11 managers and workplace supervisors. They carried out 12 interviews with staff from IETA. In addition they interviewed 31 learners and examined individual learning plans and portfolios. They reviewed a range of evidence, including progress review documents, learners' files, minutes of meetings, internal and external verifiers' reports, procedures, policies, contracts and statistical data. They also studied IETA's self-assessment report and action plan, which was produced in April 2001 following the guidelines in 'Raising the Standard'. Inspectors observed and graded two learning sessions, and observed two assessments and two progress reviews at the training centre.

Grades awarded to learning sessions

	Grade 1	Grade 2	Grade 3	Grade 4	Grade 5	Grade 6	Grade 7	Total
Construction	0	0	0	2	0	0	0	2
<b>Total</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>2</b>

## OCCUPATIONAL AREAS

### Construction

Grade 4

Programmes inspected	Number of learners	Contributory grade
Work-based learning for young people	61	4

4. There are 61 foundation modern apprentices working towards NVQs at level 2 in thermal insulation. The learners are employed in 13 national companies. Learners take up to two years to complete the apprenticeship framework. IETA continues to support learners after public funding has finished, so that they can complete their training with employers. Learners attend an industrial training centre for 10 two-week blocks of training over two years. IETA's staff carry out off-the-job assessment at this training centre. Workplace supervisors carry out on-the-job assessment by witness testimony. IETA's training officers co-ordinate on- and off-the-job training and visit the workplace and training centre to carry out progress reviews. They also assist with the recruitment and initial assessment of potential learners. Many recruits are recommended by relatives already working in the industry. Key skills are taught separately and assessed at the end of the period of training.

The following table shows the retention and achievement rates available up to the time of inspection.

Work-based learning for young people										
Foundation modern apprenticeships (FMA)										
	1997-98		1998-99		1999-2000		2000-01		2001-02	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Number that started					41		30		0	
Still in training					34	83	27	90	0	0
FMA framework completed					0	0	0	0	0	0
NVQ level 2 completed					0	0	0	0	0	0
Left without completing the framework					5	12	1	3	0	0

### STRENGTHS

- enthusiastic and highly motivated learners
- exceptionally good work placements
- well-resourced training centre
- high retention rates



## **WEAKNESSES**

- inconsistent reviews of learners' progress
- poor understanding of the NVQ framework by employers
- insufficient planning of on- and off-the job training
- poor arrangements for providing key skills
- weak assessment processes
- insufficient use of individual learning plans
- inadequate initial assessment

## **OTHER IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED**

- more detailed target-setting for learners
- better communication with workplace supervisors

5. Learners are highly motivated and enthusiastic and have a good understanding of the NVQ. They are grateful for the opportunity to train, hold their training in high regard and take pride in their portfolios. The learners were observed practising their skills in a simulated work environment and responded well to training. They appreciated the quicker ways of working shown to them by instructors.

6. All learners are employed. Employers' premises are well equipped and work placements are of an exceptionally good quality. Most give learners the opportunity to acquire a range of skills that is more than adequate to meet the requirements of the NVQ. Employers support training in a number of ways. Some have dedicated metal fabrication workshops that they allow learners from other companies to use. Some provide time during working hours for learners to assemble their portfolios of evidence.

7. IETA has recently moved to a purpose-built training centre, with two training rooms and a large practical area. The centre is well-resourced, with up-to-date training materials and equipment that reflect the best industrial practice. Learners have the opportunity to work on their own. Staff have industrial experience and are qualified trainers and assessors. They use a good variety of training methods. The ratio of trainers to learners is good.

8. Retention rates for foundation modern apprentices are well above the national average for construction apprenticeships. The retention rate for learners who started in 1999-2000 is 83 per cent and for 2000-01 is 90 per cent. No learners have yet completed the apprenticeship or achieved an NVQ at level 2. Before 1999-2000, IETA provided training leading to NVQs. For 1998-99 and 1999-2000, achievement rates

were 60 per cent and 56 per cent, respectively. These rates are expressed as the number of NVQs gained by every 100 learners. The rates are satisfactory.

9. Reviews of progress are not always thorough and are not carried out in the same way for all learners. Employers do not always play a full part in reviews. Learners and employers do not always receive a copy of the review document. Progress is not accurately recorded and learners are not set realistic and measurable targets to help them improve.

10. Most employers have a poor understanding of the NVQ and of the foundation modern apprenticeship framework. IETA's training staff do not fully explain the requirements of the NVQ to them. There is insufficient planning of on- and off-the-job training. Formal communications do not always reach workplace supervisors. Employers are not aware of the work carried out by learners during off-the-job training. Staff at the training centre are not always kept informed of the tasks carried out in the workplace. Duplication of tasks often occurs. Portfolios of evidence contain much unnecessary material. Learners do not always practise the skills they develop at the training centre in the workplace.

11. Arrangements for providing training in key skills are poor. Training in key skills is not an integral part of the training programme, and is not tackled at an early stage. Learners have little awareness of key skills and do not link key skills units to work-based tasks. Few learners have achieved any key skills units. The self-assessment report stated that training in key skills was being provided for all learners, but this is not the case.

12. The assessment process was given as a strength in the self-assessment report, but inspectors judge it to be weak. Workplace supervisors carry out assessment using witness testimony. They do not always directly observe the task being performed. There are no qualified assessors in the workplace, and there is no register of authorised signatories. Much of the evidence that learners have accumulated has not yet been assessed by a qualified assessor. This has led to slow progress for learners towards achieving NVQ units. Monitoring sheets have not been fully developed and are not completed by learners. Assessors in the training centre use simulated workplace conditions to carry out off-the-job assessments.

13. There is insufficient use of individual learning plans to record learners' progress and achievement. Not all learners' files contain a learning plan, and learning plans are not regularly updated. Learners are not given copies of their learning plans and show little awareness of their existence.

14. The initial assessment process is inadequate. The self-assessment report confirms that not all learners have had their learning needs assessed. A basic numeracy test has been given to some learners. A number of tests have not been marked or analysed. Learners do not receive feedback on the tests. There is no structured system of support for learners who need to improve their basic or key skills, and no staff with qualifications in this area of work. One learner with dyslexia was identified by an employer as

requiring additional support. This was not identified by the initial assessment. IETA provides personal support for learners when they are at the training centre and arranges their accommodation for their spells of block-release training.

#### Good Practice

*IETA organises a national practical competition for learners each year. Trophies and cash prizes are awarded. IETA also awards trophies for good performance in the regions. The national winner has the opportunity to enter the world apprentice competition. This helps to motivate the learners.*

#### Poor Practice

*Learners produce written answers to questions as part of the process of assessment. Inspectors observed learners copying questions and answers from a standard set used by assessors. Examination of learners' portfolios of evidence showed that several learners had used these answers.*

## LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

Grade 4

15. TICA and IETA have the same chief executive, who reports to the governing council of TICA. IETA employs three training officers and one administrative assistant, all of whom report directly to the chief executive. The illness of a key member of staff immediately before the inspection caused considerable difficulties for IETA in managing the inspection. There is a quality assurance manual containing quality assurance procedures. The self-assessment report is the second the organisation has produced. It was updated in April 2001.

### STRENGTHS

- good support from member companies
- well-planned relocation to new training centre

### WEAKNESSES

- insufficient co-ordination of on-and off-the job training
- inadequate arrangements for staff recruitment, appraisal and training
- insufficient training in equality of opportunity for learners and staff
- inadequate monitoring and promotion of equality of opportunity
- inadequate arrangements for internal and external verification
- poor quality assurance policy and procedures

### OTHER IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED

- clearer strategic planning
- more consistency in producing job descriptions
- more involvement of staff in review of equal opportunities policy
- more effective use of feedback
- wider involvement in the self-assessment process
- better use of management information systems

16. The members of TICA provide good support for IETA and play an active part in regional committees and on the national governing council. The council holds frequent, well-attended meetings. Companies belonging to TICA pay a training levy to IETA based on the number of employees working in thermal insulation. They provide good work placements for learners, treating them as valued employees.

17. IETA recently moved to new premises, with a view to providing better-quality and more cost-effective training. The planning for the move was comprehensive and thorough. The chief executive and council were fully involved in considering the various options for the relocation, and the financial implications. The move allowed IETA to end its reliance on subcontractors and start providing off-the-job training itself.

18. Strategic planning at IETA lacks clarity. Strategic and operational objectives are not presented in a clear and coherent way. There is an annual list of key objectives, which are a mixture of strategic objectives and operational needs. Key priorities are discussed at meetings of the governing council. The council is informed of levels of recruitment and associated budgetary implications, but does not formally monitor the quality of training.

19. Training officers do not co-ordinate on- and off-the-job training and assessment effectively. The self-assessment report stated that the two elements of the programme were integrated, but this is not so. Companies are supplied with copies of the standards for the NVQ, but these are not generally available on site, and employers are not involved in the planning of training. Employers do not always know what the learners do when they are working in the training centre. Learners often request tasks from their supervisors on their own initiative after checking the NVQ specifications themselves. Learners' records are poorly organised and important documents were missing from several files. The subcontracting of key skills training to other training providers has ended, but no alternative arrangements have been made. Most learners have made little progress in acquiring key skills. Review procedures are inadequate and many learners are not visited as frequently as they should be. Managers do not monitor the number of reviews carried out by training officers.

20. There are no formal procedures for recruiting new staff and no formal arrangements for their induction. However, a staff induction checklist and a number of other personnel procedures and documents are being drawn up. The staff handbook was produced in 1996. A new, comprehensive staff handbook has been prepared, but is in draft form. Arrangements for staff appraisal and training are inadequate. Staff do not evaluate their own performance and are not formally appraised by their manager. Training staff are not set performance targets and the only observations of training and assessment sessions that are carried out are those required for internal verification. Staff do not have personal development plans and there is no systematic identification of training needs. Managers do not keep records of staff training and there is no formal evaluation of its effectiveness. All staff have job descriptions, but they are not dated and most have not recently been reviewed. There is no standard format for job descriptions.

21. The self-assessment report judged communications to be a strength, but internal lines of communication are not strong enough to ensure that good practice is shared and that key issues are resolved. IETA's training staff do not have regular formal meetings. In the past year they have met on five occasions, three of them in June. Minutes and action points from one meeting are not reviewed at the next. Training officers carry out their roles in different ways and do not always share good practice. The organisational structure of TICA and its subsidiaries, including IETA, is not clearly defined.

**Equality of opportunity****Contributory grade 4**

22. IETA has a clearly written equal opportunities policy, which has been updated twice in the last six months by the chief executive. This was done without the full involvement of staff. The policy covers most areas of the company's activities. Monitoring of equal opportunities in the workplace is inadequate. The contract with employers expresses an expectation that they will comply with legislation on equal opportunities. There is no check that they have an equal opportunities policy or act in accordance with legislation. Learners' review sheets do not contain prompts on the subject of equal opportunities and questioning at reviews is cursory.

23. The promotion of equal opportunities is inadequate. IETA's equal opportunities policy is not displayed at the training centre and is not referred to in its literature or advertisements for learners. Marketing material is not targeted at under-represented groups, although the newly designed website makes reference to equal opportunities. IETA has recently started analysing recruitment statistics relating to gender and ethnicity, but the statistics are not discussed or acted upon. Although the self-assessment report recognises the absence of women in training, this is accepted as being a characteristic of the construction industry. The only guidance given to employers on equal opportunities was in a newsletter from TICA, published in March 2000.

24. There is insufficient training in equal opportunities for both learners and staff. During induction, training is limited to the reading out of the equal opportunities policy, with a brief explanation. Learners' understanding of the policy is not adequately checked following induction. Learners' awareness of equal opportunities is poor. Some could not recall that it had been covered at induction or what it meant. Progress reviews are not used to reinforce the learners' understanding. There has been no staff training on equal opportunities and some job descriptions contain no reference to equal opportunities. Equal opportunities issues have not been discussed at any staff meetings.

25. IETA has a grievance procedure which also functions as a complaints procedure. The contract signed by IETA, employers, learners and parents contains a copy of the procedure. Learners interviewed by inspectors knew whom they should contact if they had any cause for complaint or any personal problems. They were aware of what they should do if they were absent from work or the training centre. The training centre is accessible to people with mobility difficulties, but the work environment is not suitable for people with disabilities.

**Quality assurance****Contributory grade 5**

26. Arrangements for the internal verification of assessment are inadequate, although they are given as a strength in the self-assessment report. IETA has only one internal verifier, who is not yet qualified. The internal verification procedure has recently been reviewed, but there is no evidence of the procedure being followed. Arrangements for external verification are unacceptable. A member of IETA's staff was the awarding body's only external verifier for the qualification. He carried out the centre's approval visit and signed the approval form. He was the external verifier for centres which were subcontracted by IETA to provide training before March 2001. These conflicts of interest contravene the Qualifications and Curriculum Authority (QCA) regulations and do not provide the objectivity it requires. There has been no visit from an external verifier since IETA's training centre was approved for the training scheme in March 2001.

27. IETA's quality assurance manual was revised in April 1999. However, the documents in the manual are not in general use by staff, although the self-assessment report stated otherwise. The quality assurance manual is inadequate. It is not clear how the quality of training is assured, procedures are incomplete, and there is no internal checking to confirm that procedures are followed.

28. IETA has recently established a system for collecting the views of learners and employers. The first group of learners completed questionnaires in August 2001. No survey of employers had been completed at the time of inspection. Responses to learners' questionnaires have been clearly summarised, but staff have not yet analysed the information, or had time to introduce any improvements as a result.

29. The current self-assessment report is an updated version of IETA's first report, which was produced in 1999. The chief executive and training officers were responsible for its production. The NTP and some subcontractors were consulted verbally as part of the process. However, not all of their staff were involved and there was no formal involvement of external organisations. This lack of involvement was recognised in the self-assessment report. The views of learners were not systematically collected. The report identified practices which are part of normal practice, as strengths and failed to identify many weaknesses found at the inspection. The development plan is not sufficiently detailed.

30. Staff at IETA have recently developed a computerised system for recording information about learners. It produces the data required by the LSC but is not currently used to supply training officers with information about retention and achievement rates.

**Poor Practice**

*The centre is aware of the need to gain approval from an awarding body to provide key skills. This was discussed at a staff meeting in September 2000. Despite several meetings being held since, the item has not appeared on the agenda again because actions taken have not been minuted. The centre has still not been approved.*