

INSPECTION REPORT

Meat East Anglia Trades (Ipswich) Ltd

17 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

Meat East Anglia Trades (Ipswich) Ltd is a private training organisation. The company provides training for the meat and poultry industry. Learners work in manufacturing areas which include meat processing companies and catering and retail butchers.

Overall judgement

The quality of work-based learning is satisfactory and leadership and management are good. The overall quality of the provision is adequate to meet the reasonable needs of those receiving it.

Work-based learning for young people

There are currently 37 learners. Twenty are foundation modern apprentices and 17 are advanced modern apprentices. Achievement rates for the modern apprenticeship frameworks have been low. However, improvements in performance are now apparent. Work trials and better guidance have helped to increase the rates of retention. Seventy-three per cent of all learners have remained in training for the past 18 months. Sixteen per cent of all learners who entered the programmes left with no qualification. Learners benefit from good training in the training centre. Employers and learners value the assistance and support they receive from the staff of Meat East Anglia Trades (Ipswich) Ltd. Learners' review processes are good. Learners are set challenging targets which help them to make progress towards their qualifications.

Leadership and management

The leadership and management of Meat East Anglia Trades (Ipswich) Ltd are good. Communication between staff, learners and employers is regular and recorded. Business planning is well focused and regularly monitored. Staff are appraised annually and there is a comprehensive staff development programme. Management information systems are underdeveloped and data on learners are not easily accessible. Equal opportunities data are collected, analysed and used in the targeting of under-represented groups. The company has a clear and concise quality assurance system, all staff were involved in its development. Self-assessment is part of the company's quality assurance cycle and the action and development plan is regularly monitored and updated. The internal verification system lacks formal planning.

GRADES

Engineering, technology & manufacturing	3
Contributory grades:	
Work-based learning for young people	3

Leadership and management	2
Contributory grades:	
Equality of opportunity	2
Quality assurance	2

KEY STRENGTHS

- good retention rate now achieved
- good off-the-job training
- effective support for learners
- good internal and external communication
- good analysis and targeting of under-represented groups
- highly effective self-assessment processes

KEY WEAKNESSES

- lack of awareness of the NVQ process by learners
- weak management information systems

OTHER IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED

- easier access for learners to their individual learning plans
- inclusion of equality of opportunity message on promotional materials

THE PROVIDER AND ITS CONTEXT

1. Meat East Anglia Trades (Ipswich) Ltd (MEAT) was established in 1988 and moved to its current premises in 1989. The premises include a training and classroom area and a retail butcher's shop. Training is provided for the meat industry in Essex, Norfolk and Suffolk. The company employs eight full-time and two part-time members of staff. One part-time and four full-time members of staff are wholly employed in the running of the training programmes. Thirty modern apprentices are currently following modern apprenticeship training. Most learners are employed in meat processing plants and some work in small retail butchery outlets. Small retail butchers are in decline because of changes in shopping habits. MEAT has recently introduced a Life Skills programme. This was not inspected as a separate area because of the low number of learners, although staff and learners were spoken to as part of the overall inspection process. MEAT also provides training for employers on a range of industry-related topics.

2. Modern apprenticeship training is funded by Suffolk Learning and Skills Council (LSC) and contracted annually. Suffolk is a mainly rural county with a total population of 680,000. The economy depends heavily on agriculture and related industries, with docks and distribution forming the second largest area of economic activity. In June 2001, the unemployment rate for the county was 2.3 per cent, compared with the national average of 3 per cent. Minority ethnic groups make up 2.5 per cent of the population. The proportion of school leavers achieving five or more general certificates of secondary education (GCSEs) grades at C and above in the year 2000, was 53.3 per cent, compared with the national average of 51.6 per cent.

THE INSPECTION

3. A team of three inspectors and a specialist adviser spent a total of 12 days at MEAT during September 2001. Seven workplaces were visited, where seven employers or workplace supervisors were interviewed. Nine interviews were conducted with staff from MEAT, and 15 learners were interviewed. Inspectors observed training and assessment sessions and learners' progress reviews. They examined paperwork of the company and the awarding body, as well as learners' portfolios and personal files. LSC contracts and previous training and enterprise council (TEC) audits were also examined. Inspectors used the company's updated self-assessment report and action plan to provide information for the inspection process.

Grades awarded to learning sessions

	Grade 1	Grade 2	Grade 3	Grade 4	Grade 5	Grade 6	Grade 7	Total
Engineering, technology & manufacturing	0	2	4	0	0	0	0	6
Total	0	2	4	0	0	0	0	6

OCCUPATIONAL AREAS

Engineering, technology & manufacturing

Grade 3

Programmes inspected	Number of learners	Contributory grade
Work-based learning for young people	37	3

4. MEAT provides specialist butchery training in Essex, Suffolk and Norfolk. The company currently has 20 foundation and 17 advanced modern apprentices. Of these, 12 are training on the meat and poultry butchery operations framework, eight are training on the meat and poultry processing and manufacturing operations framework, and 17 are training on the meat processing (technical operations) framework. All foundation and advanced modern apprentices are full-time employees of MEAT and other local companies or retailers. Learners are recruited either by MEAT or directly by employers. Learners can join the programme at any time of the year. Induction takes place at MEAT's premises, or in the workplace, when learners are introduced to topics such as health and safety and equal opportunities. Learners receive an initial assessment of their basic skills. Training and assessment is carried out mainly in the workplace, but some learners attend additional training organised by MEAT. This covers topics such as food hygiene and health and safety. MEAT provides all the assessment and internal verification and helps learners to build their portfolios. Learners also receive training in key skills. The assessors visit all of their learners at least once every two weeks to review progress and carry out assessments.

The following table shows the achievement and retention 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			15		20		28		7
Still in training			0	0	2	10	11	39	7	100
FMA framework completed			1	7	9	45	5	18	0	0
NVQ level 2 completed			6	40	9	45	6	21	0	0
Left without completing the framework			14	93	9	45	12	43	0	0

Work-based learning for young people										
Advanced modern apprenticeships (AMA)	1997-98		1998-99		1999-2000		2000-01		2001-02	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
	Number that started	6		16		13		6		7
Still in training	1	17	3	19	1	8	5	83	7	100
AMA framework completed	4	67	1	6	1	8	0	0	0	0
NVQ level 2 completed	1	17	12	75	8	62	0	0	0	0
NVQ level 3 completed	4	67	1	6	1	8	0	0	0	0
Left without completing the framework	1	17	12	75	11	85	1	17	0	0

STRENGTHS

- good rate of retention now achieved
- good off-the-job training
- well-planned and effective review processes
- effective range of support for learners
- highly supportive and involved employers

WEAKNESSES

- low achievement rates for modern apprenticeship frameworks
- lack of awareness of the NVQ process by learners
- lack of consistency in the accreditation of prior learning

OTHER IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED

- easier access for learners to their individual learning plans

5. Retention rates, for the advanced modern apprenticeship especially, are now good. During 1999-2000, a number of learners from a large employer left training because of changes in their company's internal structure. Seventy-three per cent of all learners have remained on their training programmes for the past 18 months and only 16 per cent of all learners who started have left with no qualification. All the 14 learners who started in the current year are still in training. Opportunities for work trials, and better guidance from MEAT's staff, have contributed to the improved retention rate. Key skills training is integrated with the vocational training and progress and achievement are currently in

line with the framework requirements. Achievement rates for the modern apprenticeship frameworks have been low, but there is evidence of improvement.

6. MEAT provides training at employers' premises and in house. This training ensures that the learners are given flexible opportunities to develop their knowledge and understanding of meat processing. The in-house training facilities are of a high standard and provide the learners with excellent opportunities for development in both practice and theory. The learners can use a wide range of specialist equipment, for example, spit roasters and a variety of refrigeration and packing equipment. MEAT has a facility for learners to carry out research and development projects. Off-the-job training is well planned and is linked to each individual's role in employment. Structured learning packages are developed with employers to meet such specific needs. The company has well-qualified and occupationally competent training staff. This is reflected in the knowledge and understanding of the learners. The self-assessment report identified the strengths indicated here.

7. MEAT has developed effective working relationships with many employers in the local area. These employers are enthusiastic and keen to work with MEAT. Employers are kept well informed of their learners' progress. A formal, written reporting system is currently being introduced. Employers ensure that learners have sufficient opportunities to gather evidence for their NVOs and that they can change job roles to gather specific evidence. This level of involvement by employers is linked to the number of former learners from MEAT who have progressed into supervisory and management positions, or started their own businesses in the local area. A high proportion of learners remain within the industry after completing their training.

8. Assessors from MEAT, with appropriate experience and qualifications, visit learners at their workplaces to carry out training, assessment and reviews. These visits take place once every fortnight and are arranged with the learners and employers. The assessors spend sufficient time with the learners to give them the support they require. MEAT provides a high level of pastoral support. Learners are encouraged to contact their assessors by mobile phone, both during and outside office hours. One learner who became homeless was accommodated by MEAT while the problem was resolved. MEAT has supported other learners by purchasing equipment they need in their work and gives learners effective assistance in finding suitable employment. Learners are well motivated and enthusiastic and speak highly of the support offered by their assessors.

9. There is a formal, structured review process. Reviews are carried out for all learners every 12 weeks. Previously set objectives are evaluated and future objectives are set. Feedback from the assessor is recorded and all learners are given the opportunity to report on their experiences. Feedback and comments on MEAT's activities from the employers and learners are also recorded. In-house assessments are detailed and well recorded. They use MEAT's own assessment criteria, which complement the occupational standards developed by the national training organisation (NTO). Review reports are retained in the learners' personal files. Assessment plans are agreed by the learner and assessor before the assessment takes place. Assessors are supportive and

make good use of oral questions to confirm understanding. Evidence is effectively recorded and detailed feedback is provided to each individual learner. Learners are given opportunities to ask questions and have their comments recorded. All learners are given an initial assessment of their basic skills at the start of their programme. Learners who require additional support are supported by a member of MEAT's staff who holds teaching qualifications in basic numeracy and literacy. There is a procedure for the accreditation of prior learning, but this is not followed in all cases. Learners' past experience is identified but is not always taken into account when planning training.

10. Learners interviewed were not fully aware of the NVQ processes and procedures. Some were unaware of what progress they had made or which units were identified on the individual learning plans. Some learners were unable to identify the role of the assessor. None of the learners interviewed was able to identify the internal verifier. Learners' personal files contain their individual learning plan and review records. Although the individual learning plan is updated regularly, some learners do not have access to this information except when assessors visit.

Good Practice

Individual workbooks are developed for learners to use. These are designed to meet the specific needs of the individual employer. They are developed by MEAT, which works closely with employers and their representatives.

MEAT provide prospective learners with the opportunity to attend a one-day trial programme to help them decide if butchery and meat processing is a suitable choice of career.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

Grade 2

11. MEAT is a limited company, run on a day-to-day basis by the managing director. There are currently four full-time staff. One is responsible for training and the others carry out various training and administrative duties. Part-time staff and specialists are used when required. The management structure, responsibilities and internal lines of communication are clearly identified. Staff carry out training both at MEAT and at employers' premises. MEAT was accredited with the Investors in People standard in 1996 and was reaccredited in 1999. The company has an equal opportunities policy, a five-year business plan, and policy and procedures for quality assurance. The company started a self-assessment process in 1998 and has produced two self-assessment reports, with two updates.

STRENGTHS

- good internal and external communication
- effective business planning processes
- good analysis and targeting of under-represented groups
- positive staff role models
- all staff fully involved in quality assurance development
- highly effective self-assessment process
- good use of feedback from learners and employers

WEAKNESSES

- weak management information systems
- lack of equal opportunities reinforcement in the workplace
- lack of an internal verification monitoring document

OTHER IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED

- inclusion of equality of opportunity message on promotional materials

12. There are good internal and external communications, a strength identified in the self-assessment report. Staff meetings are held every six weeks and are minuted and actioned. These meetings give priority to the dissemination of management information and to current issues raised by members of staff. Review meetings for individual learning programmes take place every six months, internal verifier/assessor meetings take place every eight weeks and meetings are held at employers' premises with the work-based assessors. There are other informal meetings. Staff are thus kept well informed of all relevant issues. MEAT has long-standing and well-developed links with local employers who are encouraged to play a central role in the training programmes. The quality of the work placements is good, and MEAT maintains employers' enthusiasm for, and participation in, the training process by frequent contact and an effective flow of

information. MEAT notifies employers of relevant changes in legislation, examples of good practice and product development where applicable. Employers are very supportive of MEAT and appreciate its work and the support it gives to the learners.

13. There is an effective business planning process. MEAT has a five-year development plan, which contains an annual business plan. The plan states general and specific objectives for the company. It includes a comprehensive staff development plan and policy statement. Staff are appraised annually and specific courses and other areas of development are identified for each individual. All members of staff have already attended some form of staff development and training. One member of staff has achieved qualifications in administration, teaching, assessing and food hygiene subjects since joining the company. The business plan includes clear action-planning. Responsibilities and target dates for completion are identified. The business plan is used effectively, and all staff discuss meeting its objectives both formally at staff meetings and informally during the course of their work.

14. Information available from management information systems is limited, and is mainly produced for contractual requirements. Accurate data relating to retention and achievements are not available, although recent steps have been taken to rectify this. Data are not used as a management tool, or as a method of bringing about improvement. There is no analysis of data, or any analysis of trends except in the area of equality of opportunity. Co-ordination of on- and off-the-job training is effectively managed by using a wall-mounted chart, which shows learners' progress to date and planned events in their training programme.

Equality of opportunity

Contributory grade 2

15. MEAT has an equal opportunities policy which is monitored and updated as part of the quality assurance cycle. All staff members are responsible for promoting equal opportunities and two have received formal training which has been shared with other staff members. One staff member has also received training on dyslexia and in counselling skills. The equal opportunities policy is given to all learners at induction and to employers as part of the initial health and safety visit by MEAT's staff. The policy is displayed in the training centre. External training materials have been purchased and are now being used at induction to reinforce the equal opportunities message. Learners in the workplace, however, had little awareness of equal opportunities and were not familiar with the NVQ appeals procedures. MEAT conducts no regular monitoring of employers' equal opportunities practices. All learners are aware of the complaints procedure, including how to deal with harassment, and are asked if they have any concerns about equal opportunities concerns, as part of the formal review process.

16. Equal opportunities data are collected from application and registration forms and are analysed by computer to provide management information which identifies gender and minority ethnic group imbalances. This information is used to target under-represented sections of the community. At present, a marketing exercise is taking place with the local community groups and schools. Currently, 21 per cent of MEAT's learners are women, in an industry which traditionally employs men. Six per cent are from minority ethnic groups, compared with 2.5 per cent in the local population. An Asian butcher has requested training as a result of the latest marketing exercise and programmes are being arranged to match the cultural needs of this and similar employers. The material used for this, and other company literature, does not clearly state the company's commitment to equal opportunities. One part-time and three full-time members of staff are from minority ethnic groups. They present positive role models to prospective learners, as do female staff who are competent in the butchery and food preparation areas. Staff are also able to relate their own experiences to the Life Skills learners and the learners value this. A long-standing arrangement with a local school, for pupils with learning difficulties, allows individuals to spend time at MEAT learning skills such as butchery and baking.

Quality assurance**Contributory grade 2**

17. MEAT has a clear and concise set of quality assurance policies which are backed up by a series of quality assurance procedures. The current system is continuing to develop, having replaced an earlier system which was found to be no longer appropriate. The managing director has overall responsibility for the quality assurance system and carries out monthly checks on quality. There is a system for corrective action if instances of non-compliance are identified. Self-assessment is an integral part of the quality assurance process. The company's first self-assessment report was produced in 1998 and was updated in 1999. The current self-assessment report was produced in January 2001 and updated in August 2001. The self-assessment process involves all staff, who have a thorough understanding of it and contribute through the regular staff meetings where self-assessment is a fixed agenda item. To enhance the self-assessment process, views were sought from employers, learners and external associates. A detailed action and development plan has been produced which identifies specific areas of responsibility and measurable timescales. The action plan is reviewed at each staff meeting. The self-assessment report was compiled using the framework of 'Raising the Standard'. The grades matched those awarded by inspectors. The strengths and weaknesses identified in the report were accurate in most cases.

18. The quality assurance system is fully focused on the training process. Direct training by company staff, and NVQ assessments, are observed and reported on in detail as part of the quality assurance of the training programme. There is, however, insufficient use of data to monitor trends in the performance of learners. All staff are involved in the production of the quality assurance procedures and are aware of how changes to the system can be made. One staff member has a degree in quality management. The internal verification system does not have an overall plan to identify activities undertaken and some paperwork lacks signatures and dates. Internal verification is carried out by one staff member and one external consultant. Internal verification meets the requirements of the awarding body and was identified as good practice in the most recent external verifier's report. Internal verifiers meet with assessors every eight weeks and, where possible, assessors attend or are visited in the workplace by the internal verifiers.

19. Learners complete questionnaires while they are on their training programmes and when they leave. Questionnaires are also completed following in-house training sessions and by employers on an annual basis. Good feedback is gathered from all these questionnaires and this is analysed to identify areas for improvement. There are numerous examples of improvements being introduced as a direct result of this feedback. For example, a laptop computer was purchased to be taken out to learners who do not visit the training centre frequently and felt they were not gaining the required experience for their information technology training. Learners identified that the quality of training materials on the basic food hygiene course could be improved and these were rewritten and updated. Feedback from employers led to improved communication with regard to the requirements of the NVQ training programmes and more detailed information on learners' progress.

Good Practice

Some employers do not have their own quality assurance procedures. MEAT's staff have been helping some of these companies to develop their own procedures based on International Food Standards. This help and support has been given at no cost to the employer and benefits learners by enhancing working practices within their workplaces.

A learner who suffers from arthritis has had a special workstation provided to ensure comfort while working on the computer and has also had a special attachment purchased to allow her to pour a kettle safely.

Workbooks and examination papers for the basic food hygiene course are provided in a variety of languages and staff use these materials to give training to individuals whose first language is not English.