

# INSPECTION REPORT

## **Insulation & Environmental Training Agency Reinspection**

**30 May 2003**



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. 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 **learndirect** provision
- Adult and Community Learning
- learning and job preparation programmes funded by Jobcentre Plus
- education and training in prisons, at the invitation of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Prisons.

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



## SUMMARY

### The provider

The Insulation & Environmental Training Agency is the training division of the Thermal Insulation Contractors' Association, and has its head office, administrative centre and training centre in Darlington, County Durham. It supports the specialist training requirements of the thermal insulation services industry, through a voluntary training levy on association members. It is the sole provider of the foundation modern apprenticeship in thermal insulation and operates nationally. Its training provision in England is funded through the national contracting service of the Learning and Skills Council.

### Overall judgement

At the original inspection in September 2001, inspectors judged that training for learners in construction was unsatisfactory. Leadership and management and equality of opportunity were also unsatisfactory, and quality assurance was very weak. At the end of the reinspection process, all aspects of the provision were judged to be satisfactory.

### Grades awarded

	Original	Reinspection
<b>Leadership and management</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>3</b>
Contributory grades:		
Equality of opportunity	4	3
Quality assurance	5	3

	Original	Reinspection
<b>Construction</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>3</b>
Contributory grades:		
Work-based learning for young people	4	3

## INSULATION & ENVIRONMENTAL TRAINING AGENCY REINSPECTION

During the reinspection process, the inspection team identified the following key strengths, weaknesses and other improvements needed:

### KEY STRENGTHS

- thorough development of learners' practical skills
- good rate of achievement of national vocational qualifications (NVQs)
- particularly good support from member companies
- good communications
- significant improvement in quality assurance arrangements
- effective equality of opportunity training for learners
- good resources for training

### KEY WEAKNESSES

- below average recent retention rates
- slow completion of modern apprenticeship frameworks
- no monitoring of learners' performance by the governing council of the Thermal Insulation Contractors' Association
- weak strategies to raise retention and achievement rates
- incomplete equality of opportunity arrangements

## THE REINSPECTION

1. The reinspection of the Insulation & Environmental Training Agency (IETA) was carried out in two stages over a total of 18 days in February and May 2003. IETA provided an updated self-assessment report in December 2002. Inspectors visited 19 work placements and interviewed 16 employers and/or supervisors. They interviewed 24 learners and examined 19 portfolios and 19 individual learning plans. Inspectors observed and graded three learning sessions.

Grades awarded to learning sessions at the original inspection

	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>

Grades awarded to learning sessions at reinspection

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

## LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

**Grade 3**

During the reinspection process, the inspection team identified the following strengths, weaknesses and other improvements needed:

### STRENGTHS

- particularly good support from members of the Thermal Insulation Contractors' Association
- effective strategic planning and operational management
- good communications
- effective equality of opportunity training for learners
- significant improvement in quality assurance arrangements
- good auditing process

### WEAKNESSES

- no monitoring of learners' performance by the governing council of the Thermal Insulation Contractors' Association
- weak strategies to raise retention and achievement rates
- insufficient use of feedback to improve provision
- incomplete equality of opportunity arrangements

### OTHER IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED

- better identification of and support for learners' literacy, numeracy and language needs

2. The Thermal Insulation Contractors' Association has increased its involvement with IETA since the original inspection, providing particularly good support. Its members offer good work placements to learners and treat them as valued employees. IETA's staff play an active part in the association's regional committees and on the national governing council. Companies belonging to the association pay a training levy to IETA based on the number of their employees working in thermal insulation. They make a significant financial contribution to the training. The governing council paid for IETA staff to visit an industry-related event in the Netherlands to seek out new ideas to improve the training programme.

3. IETA's strategic planning and operational management have improved. The governing council of the Thermal Insulation Contractors' Association, recognising IETA's slow progress in overcoming the weaknesses identified at the original inspection, changed IETA's management structure. It established the new posts of general manager and training manager. The two managers have made good progress in identifying and establishing strategies to improve individual and collective performance. They now

attend quarterly meetings of the governing council and regional committees. The governing council discusses the key priorities of the business, and considers levels of recruitment and associated budgetary implications.

4. Training officers have improved the co-ordination of on- and off-the-job training since the original inspection. Direct assessment in the workplace, however, is at an early stage of development. Employers now receive a comprehensive guide to the work of IETA. This includes the organisation's strategic objectives, an explanation of work-based learning and the modern apprenticeship framework, and information on health and safety and equality of opportunity. Employers do not receive a concise explanation of the NVQ.

5. Most employers know what their learners do at the training centre. Learners' records are now well organised and thorough. The arrangements for developing and assessing key skills have improved significantly. Some learners who started in 2000-01 have made little progress in acquiring key skills, but many of those who started since 2001-02 are making good progress towards achieving key skills qualifications. The original inspection judged learners' progress reviews to be inadequate and found that training officers had not visited many learners as frequently as required. Progress reviews are now satisfactory, although managers do not monitor their quality.

6. There are now formal procedures for recruiting, inducting and developing staff. All staff receive a comprehensive staff handbook. Arrangements for staff appraisal and training, considered inadequate at the original inspection, are now good. Staff evaluate their own performance before formal appraisal by their manager. Training staff are not set performance targets, and training and assessment sessions are only observed as part of the internal verification process. Staff have personal development plans and there is systematic identification of their training needs. Managers keep records of staff training but there is no formal evaluation of its effectiveness. Most staff have clear job descriptions. The general manager has no job description and has not been appraised by the president of the governing council.

7. Since the original inspection, IETA has improved its initial assessment process. However, the identification of learners' additional support needs, and the provision of appropriate support for them is not systematic. Learners recruited by IETA on behalf of employers are given an initial assessment to determine their ability to complete a learning programme. Learners referred for training by their employer are not given an initial assessment by IETA. The training officers often rely on individual trainers to assess learners' support needs and provide appropriate support. Managers do not assess the effectiveness of this process. Some learners' support needs have not been identified. There is no procedure to show how different types of support will be provided. No staff are qualified to teach basic skills.

8. The original inspection identified that internal lines of communication were not strong enough to ensure that good practice was shared and key issues resolved. There are now regular formal meetings of all staff, at which minutes and action points are

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recorded. However, these are not reviewed at the following meeting. Training officers now carry out their roles in more consistent and effective ways, although they do not always share good practice. The organisational structure of the Thermal Insulation Contractors' Association and its subsidiaries, including IETA, is clear. The use of management information has improved since the original inspection but the management information system is not used to record learners' progress or key skills achievement. Training officers do not have remote access to the centrally held management information.

9. The governing council of the Thermal Insulation Contractors' Association does not formally monitor or evaluate the quality of training, or learners' retention and achievement rates. It has no formal strategy for improving retention and achievement rates.

**Equality of opportunity****Contributory grade 3**

10. IETA's equality of opportunity arrangements have improved since the original inspection. Learners now receive good induction training in equality of opportunity, exploring important issues through good-quality learning materials. There is thorough consideration of all aspects of equality of opportunity, including direct and indirect discrimination, and staff evaluate learners' knowledge before and after the training. Learners remember the induction training clearly. Some learners have a thorough understanding of equality of opportunity. Training officers reinforce learners' understanding of equality of opportunity during progress reviews and record this satisfactorily.

11. Since the original inspection, IETA has implemented a range of strategies to promote equality of opportunity. The equality of opportunity policy is satisfactory and copies are prominently displayed around the training centre. The equality of opportunity sections in the handbooks for staff and learners are detailed. The employers' guide contains a clear explanation of the equality of opportunity policy. All staff have participated in equality of opportunity training and many have had training in issues such as dealing with dyslexia and drugs awareness to help them identify learners in need of additional support. Equality of opportunity is an agenda item at all staff meetings.

12. IETA has a clear policy on harassment and bullying which is described in the learners' handbook. Learners confuse this policy with the grievance procedure, which requires them to refer personal concerns to their employer, rather than their training officer. However, several learners have raised bullying issues with IETA staff and these have been dealt with swiftly and effectively.

13. Arrangements for equality of opportunity are not yet complete. Data on equality of opportunity are collected and analysed but the analysis is superficial and has not resulted in effective action-planning. IETA staff help employers to find suitable recruits, but the final decision on whom to employ rests with the employers. Data on applicants to the training programme are collected but not evaluated to identify trends in performance. Actions to increase the proportion of learners from under-represented groups are at an early stage. The self-assessment report recognises the lack of women in the industry. IETA has started to raise the level of awareness about these issues and has arranged for recruitment to be an agenda item at the next meeting of the governing council. Some inappropriate imagery is displayed in workplaces.

**Quality assurance****Contributory grade 3**

14. The original inspection found IETA's quality assurance to be very weak. It is now satisfactory. The quality assurance manual contains revised and improved procedures that cover most aspects of the training provision. The previous inadequate arrangements for internal verification are now satisfactory. One member of staff is a qualified internal verifier and another is awaiting accreditation. There is one qualified assessor and one who is working towards accreditation. There is now planned sampling of assessment. Staff have introduced observation of assessment in the workplace. They understand the quality assurance arrangements and are involved in developing them. IETA's development plan is comprehensive and detailed. It contains good targets for achievement, which are satisfactorily monitored and evaluated.

15. There is an effective quality audit process. This process, introduced in January 2003, applies to all procedures in the quality assurance manual. Audit documents are detailed and thoroughly completed. Staff monitor the progress of actions taken after an audit, and thoroughly check all documents. The audit process convinced staff to introduce a much clearer handbook for learners. Staff receive good training in quality assurance and internal audit. They have a thorough understanding of the audit process and are effectively involved in it.

16. Some of the quality assurance processes have not operated long enough to demonstrate improvement. For example, the monitoring of training is informal and not yet part of the quality assurance arrangements. The training manager regularly observes staff carrying out training, but only provides informal feedback to aid development. There is no policy to link all the quality assurance arrangements. The self-assessment process does not yet involve all staff sufficiently. Learners' views are not routinely gathered and those of employers are gathered but not used effectively. However, the most recent self-assessment report, produced in December 2002, was accurate in its assessment of the provision. The grades in the self-assessment report were the same as those given by inspectors.

Good Practice
<p><i>IETA has developed a comprehensive guide for employers that explains most aspects of the training programme and their involvement in it. It describes the company's strategic priorities, and gives clear, detailed explanations of work-based learning, modern apprenticeships and NVQs. It explains how work-based learning can improve employers' business performance. It describes IETA's recruitment and selection process, and its approach to designing programmes, and training and assessing learners. The guide explains the company's health and safety, and equal opportunities procedures, and how they affect learners and employers.</i></p>

## AREAS OF LEARNING

### Construction

Grade 3

Programmes inspected	Number of learners	Contributory grade
Work-based learning for young people	91	3

During the reinspection process, the inspection team identified the following strengths, weaknesses and other improvements needed:

### STRENGTHS

- thorough development of learners' practical skills
- good rate of achievement of NVQs
- effective employer involvement
- good resources for training
- good support for learners

### WEAKNESSES

- slow completion rate for modern apprenticeship frameworks
- insufficient use of workplace evidence
- falling retention rates

17. IETA has made considerable progress in dealing with the weaknesses in construction training identified at the original inspection. The number of construction learners has now increased to 91, and the number of employers to 31. Learners work towards an NVQ at level 2 in thermal insulation.

18. Learners develop a wide range of good practical skills both at the training centre and at their work placements. The well-planned training programme links the development of job knowledge, practical skills and key skills. The training in practical skills is good, and the teaching of background knowledge and key skills is satisfactory, maintaining the quality of provision identified at the original inspection. Learners and employers are satisfied with the level of practical skills achieved, which often exceed the requirements of the NVQ.

19. The achievement rate for level 2 NVQs is good. In 2000-01, 80 per cent of learners achieved their NVQ, and current trends suggest that this high rate of achievement will continue.

20. IETA effectively involves employers in training. Working relationships between employers, learners and training officers are good. IETA's training officers co-ordinate on- and off-the-job training, visiting the training centre and the workplaces to carry out progress reviews. They also assist with the recruitment and assessment of potential learners. Many recruits are recommended to IETA by relatives already working in the industry. Employers plan work for the learners which reflects the competences required by the industry.

21. The original inspection identified the well-resourced training centre as a strength, and this has been developed further. There are three classrooms, one of which is used well for key skills teaching. There are good, relevant handouts and working drawings, and copies of the appropriate British Standards. The practical training areas contain well-laid-out and realistic training rigs that replicate site conditions. A full range of insulation materials is used, reflecting the materials used on site. However, there are not enough hand tools for the number of learners. There are sufficient training staff. They are occupationally competent and keep their knowledge up to date by visiting workplaces, but they do not hold teaching qualifications.

22. Learners receive particularly good support, both on and off the job. Employers are aware of the off-the-job content of the training programme and arrange for learners to develop additional skills in the workplace. Some employers provide time for learners to assemble their portfolios during working hours. IETA's training officers provide pastoral support to learners, often outside normal working hours. Learners attending the training centre come from all over the country and IETA provides accommodation for them. Many learners expressed concerns about the poor quality of this accommodation, but were reluctant to put their concerns into writing as requested by IETA.

23. At the original inspection, initial assessment was judged to be inadequate. It is now adequate. Learners' initial assessment tests are marked quickly and the results are recorded in their individual learning plan. However, the plans are not used to guide off-the-job learning. They are not kept up to date with details of progress reviews. Training staff are not always aware of learners' additional support needs. There is no strategy for the provision of additional support, and some learners are not receiving the support they need.

24. The original inspection judged assessment to be weak. It is now thorough and reliable. Learners are assessed in the training centre and their progress is monitored in detail. Training officers carry out regular progress reviews at learners' workplaces. They link what learners achieve at the training centre to their experience in the workplace, and set them good short-term targets.

25. Learners are making slow progress towards completing their modern apprenticeship frameworks and the achievement rate is low. The planned length of the modern apprenticeship training programme is two years, but IETA is supporting many learners beyond this period. Only 43 per cent of learners recruited in 1999-2000 have achieved

their modern apprenticeship framework. Many learners failed to complete their key skills qualifications, and staff have now introduced new methods of training and assessment for key skills to remedy this. Until recently, all assessment took place during learners' block-release periods at the training centre.

26. There is insufficient use of evidence gathered in the workplace. Learners attend 10 two-week blocks of training at the national training centre in Darlington over two years. IETA's staff carry out off-the-job training and assessment at the centre. Direct assessment in the workplace has only just begun. Workplace supervisors help learners to gather evidence on the job by signing log sheets to confirm that their work has been completed to the appropriate standard. However, training staff do not ensure that learners are fully aware of the range of diverse evidence, including photographs, job sheets, timesheets, drawings and trainers' questions, that could be collected at their workplace. Learners carry out a wide range of activities on site, but these are not always used to provide evidence for assessments.

27. The retention rate has decreased over the past three years. Ninety-four per cent of the 33 learners who started programmes in 1999-2000 were retained. Many of these learners had transferred from other providers. Sixty-seven per cent of the 49 learners who started programmes in 2001-02 were retained.