

# INSPECTION REPORT

## **Birmingham Electrical Training Ltd Reinspection**

**21 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 **learnirect** 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

Birmingham Electrical Training Ltd was established in 1991. It is a private limited company, based in central Birmingham, which provides work-based learning for young people in construction. The company offers specialist training in the installation and commissioning of electrical and electrotechnical systems and equipment. Fifty-seven learners are working towards national vocational qualifications (NVQs) at level 3 and 222 are following advanced modern apprenticeship programmes. Most off-the-job training is subcontracted to three local colleges of further education, although Birmingham Electrical Training Ltd is training one group of learners on its own premises. On-the-job training is subcontracted to a group of 105 employers. The training is funded through Birmingham and Solihull Learning and Skills Council.

The strategic development of the company is the responsibility of the chairperson, the director of training and the managing director. The operational management is the responsibility of the director of training, supported by the deputy general manager. There are 12 staff, comprising a training co-ordinator, a training manager, four training officers, three tutors, an office manager and two administrative assistants. Birmingham Electrical Training Ltd relocated to a new training centre in September 2002.

### Overall judgement

The original inspection in April 2002 found that training for learners in construction was satisfactory. However, Birmingham Electrical Training Ltd's leadership and management, equality of opportunity and quality assurance were unsatisfactory. 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	4	3

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

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

### **KEY STRENGTHS**

- effective communications
- wide range of activities to widen participation
- good use of feedback
- good training
- effective support for learners

### **KEY WEAKNESSES**

- poor retention rates
- incomplete quality assurance arrangements
- insufficient reinforcement of equal opportunities

### **OTHER IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED**

- better publicity materials to attract under-represented groups

## THE REINSPECTION

1. The reinspection of Birmingham Electrical Training Ltd (BET) was conducted by three inspectors over a total of four inspection days. It took place in two stages in February and May 2003. BET had prepared a revised self-assessment report, a development plan and progress report for inspectors to examine.

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	2	1	0	0	0	0	3
<b>Total</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>0</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

- good strategic planning
- effective communications
- wide range of activities to widen participation
- good use of feedback

### WEAKNESSES

- insufficient reinforcement of equal opportunities
- incomplete quality assurance arrangements

### OTHER IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED

- better publicity materials to attract under-represented groups

2. BET has a clear mission statement and a detailed and comprehensive strategic plan which reflects the organisation's values. The plan covers all aspects of BET's business and describes in detail the strategy for improving the learners' experience. Measurable and achievable targets are set for all aspects of the learners' programmes. These include widening participation, achievement of technical certificates and key skills qualifications, recruitment and retention rates, and learners' satisfaction. Many of the targets have brief explanations of how they will be achieved. The plan sets out detailed short-, medium- and long-term goals which will lead to continual development of the provision.

3. BET has effective internal and external communication arrangements. The company is represented on a national forum for the promotion of training, and staff are also involved in a range of initiatives. For example, BET has set up quality circle meetings with employers to identify and resolve issues and concerns arising from the training programmes. BET encourages good relationships with external organisations. Managers have contacted a successful training organisation to learn from its good practice. A number of actions and initiatives are planned that will build on the work developed by this organisation and improve BET's services to learners. Staff also maintain contact with tutors from other organisations and share assignments with them. There are regular meetings attended by all BET's staff. The quality of the minutes of meetings has been improved and they are presented in a clear and logical format. There are regular agenda items, and actions are recorded with staff responsibilities and timescales for completion which are followed up at the next meeting. A new member of staff spoke highly of the support received. Appraisal takes place regularly and a relevant and extensive development plan is designed to meet the individual needs of staff, and the business



needs of the company. Through the training they receive, staff are able to develop and improve the effectiveness of their teaching and assessment.

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

4. BET staff actively promote construction training through regular school, university and careers events. Many of these events include women staff who provide role models for females wishing to join the industry. Two one-day taster sessions for school pupils have been offered this year, and a further two are planned exclusively for girls from local schools. During these sessions pupils complete health and safety training and work in the training centre on electrical projects. BET staff have developed an extended taster course to widen participation by under-represented groups. This full-time course takes place over six weeks and includes three weeks at the training centre and three weeks on work experience. Most of the learners on the first course have successfully achieved a nationally recognised qualification. One learner from this group has been offered a trial employment and training period by a local employer.

5. The training co-ordinator is a member of a local black and minority ethnic learning group. The group influences and supports providers of education and training to implement race equality in a way that reflects the cultures within their community. Clear targets and a strategy have been set for recruitment from under-represented groups. The strategy includes targeting specific areas of the city where few people take part in vocational training programmes.

6. Equal opportunities is a standard agenda item at staff meetings. However, there is little evidence that meaningful discussions of equal opportunities take place during these meetings. There is informative promotional material for employers but it does not encourage them to recruit from under-represented groups. The employers' handbook contains stereotypical images of white, male groups and individual learners. BET has commissioned new material but this is not yet in use. Equal opportunities is covered extensively during learners' induction through presentations that are clear, detailed and up to date. Learners regard the induction as memorable. However, other than at progress reviews, there is little reinforcement of equality of opportunity in the work-place. BET does not always ensure that employers have a relevant equal opportunities policy and procedures.

**Quality assurance**

**Contributory grade 3**

7. BET has a thorough and well-planned internal verification process that provides feedback to staff, and aids the development of assessment practices. There are development days for assessors twice a year to standardise their activities and improve the consistency of assessments. Observation documents are complete and include thorough feedback with actions for improvement.

8. BET carries out a detailed analysis of learners' ethnicity and gender. Data are gathered from applications, initial assessments, interviews and selection, and when learners start on the programme. Targets are then set in the recruitment policy for the increase in the numbers of learners from under-represented groups. To achieve the targets, BET focuses its recruitment activities in specific areas of the city.

9. There is extensive analysis of learners' and employers' feedback. Appropriate and relevant questionnaires are given to employers, and first-year to fourth-year learners. The analysis is clear and thorough and clearly indicates any areas of concern. A quality circle has recently been introduced. This gives BET staff and employers informative discussion sessions that raise awareness and provide feedback. At their first meeting employers made recommendations to improve retention rates. Some of these have been implemented by BET but they have not yet been reviewed. They also discussed the self-assessment report.

10. All staff contribute to, and feed back on, the self-assessment report at staff meetings. The report contains some strengths that inspectors considered to be satisfactory areas of provision. However, not all BET's key strengths are identified in the report. Most of the weaknesses identified at the original inspection are being dealt with.

11. BET's staff monitor subcontracted provision informally, checking on learners' progress and attendance. They do not formally monitor the training given at subcontractors' premises, and BET relies too heavily on the subcontractors' own quality assurance arrangements. Two of BET's staff have recently been trained in peer observation techniques and BET has agreed with one subcontractor to regular observations taking place. As yet, no observations have been conducted. A recent addition to the procedure manual means that from July 2003, subcontracted off-the-job training will be formally reviewed termly and annually. It is too soon to judge the effectiveness of this procedure.

## AREAS OF LEARNING

### Construction

Grade 3

Programmes inspected	Number of learners	Contributory grade
Work-based learning for young people	279	3

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

#### STRENGTHS

- good training
- good resources
- effective support for learners

#### WEAKNESSES

- poor retention rates

12. Learners receive good training, both off the job and in the workplace. Off-the-job training is well planned and caters for the range of learners' abilities and styles of learning. All training staff are appropriately qualified. There are comprehensive monitoring systems, accessible to learners, to ensure accurate recording of the achievement of NVQ elements and units. On-the-job training is carried out by experienced craftspeople and supervisors, who act as work-based recorders for the learners' site evidence. Employers understand the NVQ process and work alongside the training officers to co-ordinate training, ensuring that learners' work enables them to gain experience and evidence for their NVQ. Workplace supervisors sign the learners' logbook when tasks and activities have been successfully completed. There is a wide range of small and medium-sized employers, providing a wide variety of contracted work. This includes installations in small domestic properties, retail outlets and large city centre redevelopment projects. Learners produce a good standard of practical work, which is often scrutinised and approved by external authorities. Assessment practices are thorough. The assessment programme is planned, and learners are briefed to ensure that they understand the assessment process. There is good questioning to confirm learners' background knowledge, clear feedback from assessors on the outcome of assessment, and NVQ paperwork is completed in detail. Learners' progress is reviewed every two to three months, depending on their needs. Progress reviews are detailed and thorough. Short-term targets are set for the achievement of NVQ units. Progress towards these achievements is closely monitored. Health and safety is a key feature of

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the review, along with learners' understanding of equal opportunity issues. The learner, training officer and employer, or their representatives, all receive copies of the review paperwork. Key skills training is integrated with the vocational programmes. Some learners receive key skills training at BET's training centre. This is a recent and successful initiative. All the first group of learners achieved their key skills qualifications. Many of the current learners have achieved the key skills qualifications early in their training programme.

13. The company moved into new, purpose-built premises in September 2002. The building is light and airy with a good mix of well-equipped, large and small classrooms. There is sufficient up-to-date equipment in the workshops, and good stocks of tools and materials. Learners' skills are tested in a well-equipped testing facility that closely simulates a construction site. Off-the-job training is subcontracted to three local colleges. All have good workshop and classroom facilities. Learners have access to computers both in college and at BET's training centre, where information and communications technology facilities are particularly good. The computers are networked and have broadband connection to the Internet. All have relevant, up-to-date software. The ground floor of the training centre is accessible to users of wheelchairs but training facilities on the first floor are not.

14. Training officers are experienced and have relevant occupational qualifications. They give good training and pastoral support to all learners. The training officers give their mobile telephone numbers to learners so that they can be contacted to offer support or to confirm assessment dates and times and other operational details. Employers and workplace supervisors receive continuous support from training officers, improving their understanding of the modern apprenticeship framework and the content and process of the NVQ. The employers' handbook has helped them to provide good training in the workplace. Learners are offered courses additional to their modern apprenticeships, including portable appliance testing and wiring regulations. One learner who has additional learning needs was given support and guidance by tutors at the college and by the provider. In the final written skills test the learner received support from a reader. Three local companies recently reduced their workforces and 33 learners were made redundant. BET staff worked with the learners, helping them to complete curriculum vitae and conduct job searches. Over half of the learners are now back in employment and training.

15. Initial assessment of learners takes place at the recruitment stage. Only those capable of passing key skills qualifications at level 2 in application of number and communications and level 1 in information technology are offered places on programmes. Those who do not meet the requirements are given the opportunity and support to retake the entry test. A small number of learners who have additional learning needs have been accepted for training. These learners receive good support and guidance from training officers.

16. Since 1995, retention rates on the NVQ programme have been consistently poor, and some learners have made poor progress towards completing their qualification. BET

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has not recruited any learners to this programme since 2001. The retention rate for advanced modern apprentices declined from 60 per cent for learners who started in 1996-97 to 42 per cent for those who started in 1997-98. Retention and achievement rates are not available for more recent years as the programmes have not yet finished.