

# REINSPECTION REPORT

## **Intec Business Colleges plc Reinspection**

**14 May 2004**



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 learning within the remit of a single inspectorate. The ALI is responsible for inspecting a wide range of government-funded learning, including:

- work-based learning 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.

# REINSPECTION REPORT

## Intec Business Colleges plc Reinspection

### Contents

#### Summary

Description of the provider	1
Scope of provision	1
About the reinspection	3
Overall judgement	3
Grades	3
Key findings	4

#### Detailed reinspection findings

Leadership and management	11
Equality of opportunity	12
Quality assurance	13
Business administration, management & professional	16
Information & communications technology	20
Retailing, customer service & transportation	22

## REINSPECTION REPORT

### DESCRIPTION OF THE PROVIDER

1. Intec Business Colleges plc (Intec) was founded in 1982 as a privately owned recruitment and training organisation. In July 2002 it became a public limited company. It provides work-based national vocational qualifications (NVQs) and modern apprenticeship programmes for 890 employed young people, funded by the Learning and Skills Council (LSC). The Intec head office is in Rugby town centre and the LSC contract is co-ordinated by the Coventry and Warwickshire LSC. Intec operates eight business units out of seven local centres in Rugby, Nottingham, Lincoln, Northampton, Milton Keynes, Oxford and Bristol. Each centre is monitored by local LSCs. The Rugby centre manages its local provision and the national contracts division. The national contracts work offers mostly call-handling NVQs to employees of two large organisations in Hartlepool and Leeds. In addition, Intec offers private training and qualifications to employers and their employees, mostly in office-related skills and it operates as a subcontractor for LSC contracts held by other large national organisations.

2. There are two directors and a non-executive director. The managing director is involved in the strategic and operational management of the business and is based at the Rugby head office. The other director is the operational manager of the Lincoln centre and he is responsible for equal opportunities and diversity throughout the whole company. Two Intec training centre managers have cross-company responsibility for information and communications technology (ICT) and health and safety. The finance manager, quality assurance manager and direct marketing manager and their teams are based at the head office. The four head office managers and the local centre operations managers form the senior management team. Each training centre's manager is responsible for all qualifications offered at their centre and each has a senior tutor/internal verifier, other internal verifiers, assessors, and marketing and administration staff. Sales and marketing is managed from the head office. Intec has 125 full-time staff and 15 part-time associate staff.

### SCOPE OF PROVISION

#### **Business administration, management & professional**

3. Intec has 366 learners on business administration, management and professional programmes. Of the 209 foundation modern apprentices, 190 are administration learners and 19 are accountancy learners. Of the 87 advanced modern apprentices, 69 are administration learners, seven are accountancy learners and 11 are management learners. Seventy learners are following an NVQ-only programme: 10 are working towards an administration qualification, 10 an accounts qualification, and 50 a management qualification. All learners are employed. Most learners are referred to Intec by their employers, although some learners were found employment by Intec having been referred through external agencies such as Connexions. Initial assessments are carried out by the accounts or marketing managers at one of seven Intec training

centres. All learners receive induction training either at Intec or in the workplace, covering course content, health and safety and equality of opportunity. Intec staff visit the administration and business learners' workplaces every three or four weeks for assessments. Most administration and business learners attend off-the-job training for technical certificates and key skills qualifications at Intec centres. Some accounts learners receive off-the-job training at an Intec training centre, and most accountancy learners take an external examination. Intec staff carry out reviews with learners every 10-12 weeks.

### **Information & communications technology**

4. Fourteen ICT learners remain, as Intec is no longer recruiting to the ICT programmes. These learners are managed by four of the Intec local training centres. Five are foundation modern apprentices, five are advanced modern apprentices and four are on NVQ programmes at level 3. Three of the level 3 NVQ learners are working towards an NVQ in installing and support of information technology (IT); all the other learners are working towards NVQs in Using IT. All learners are employed. Learners receive an induction into the requirements of the programme by Intec staff. All IT training takes place on employers' premises, by employers or Intec staff. The learners attend one of the local Intec training centres for workshops in key skills, application of number and communication. Intec assessors visit learners' workplaces to carry out assessments every two to four weeks and reviews every 10-12 weeks. Intec has just begun an E-skills/LSC pilot for a new qualification. The pilot programme has 45 learners.

### **Retailing, customer service & transportation**

5. Intec has 510 learners on retailing, customer service and transportation programmes. Of these, 68 are advanced modern apprentices, 384 are foundation modern apprentices and 58 are on NVQ programmes. Of the 319 learners on customer service programmes, 62 are advanced modern apprentices, 213 are foundation modern apprentices, and 44 are following NVQ programmes at level 2 and 3. Of the 87 learners on call-handling programmes, one is an advanced modern apprentice, 84 are foundation modern apprentices and two are on NVQ programmes. Of the 79 learners on distribution, warehousing and storage operations programmes, one is an advanced modern apprentice, 76 are foundation modern apprentices and two are on NVQ programmes. Four of the 25 learners on retailing and sales programmes are advanced modern apprentices, 11 are foundation modern apprentices and 10 are on NVQ programmes. All learners are employed. Learners can join the programme at any time of year. Most of the learners are recruited directly from employers. All learners receive an induction that covers the requirements of their qualification, health and safety and equality of opportunity, and they complete initial assessments. Intec staff provide off-the-job training in the workplace, or at the local Intec training centre. Intec staff visit the learners' workplace every three or four weeks for assessments and every 10-12 weeks for progress reviews.

## ABOUT THE REINSPECTION

Number of inspectors	14
Number of inspection days	99
Number of learner interviews	171
Number of staff interviews	163
Number of employer interviews	59
Number of locations/sites/learning centres visited	8

## OVERALL JUDGEMENT

6. At the previous inspection in September 2002, the quality of the provision in business administration, management and professional and ICT were found to be unsatisfactory. Leadership and management were unsatisfactory, as were the arrangements for quality assurance. The quality of the provision for retailing, customer service and transportation and for health, social care and public services was satisfactory. Arrangements for equality of opportunity were satisfactory. At the end of the reinspection process all aspects of the provision except for quality assurance were found to be satisfactory. The arrangements for quality assurance remain unsatisfactory. Health, social care and public services training is no longer provided by Intec.

## GRADES

Grades awarded at previous inspection

*grade 1= outstanding, grade 2 = good, grade 3 = satisfactory, grade 4 = unsatisfactory, grade 5 = very weak*

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

<b>Business administration, management &amp; professional</b>	<b>4</b>
Contributory grades:	
Work-based learning for young people	4

<b>Information &amp; communications technology</b>	<b>4</b>
Contributory grades:	
Work-based learning for young people	4

<b>Retailing, customer service &amp; transportation</b>	<b>3</b>
Contributory grades:	
Work-based learning for young people	3

## INTEC BUSINESS COLLEGES PLC REINSPECTION

<b>Health, social care &amp; public services</b>	<b>3</b>
Contributory grades:	
Work-based learning for young people	3

### Grades awarded at reinspection

*grade 1= outstanding, grade 2 = good, grade 3 = satisfactory, grade 4 = unsatisfactory, grade 5 = very weak*

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

<b>Business administration, management &amp; professional</b>	<b>3</b>
Contributory grades:	
Work-based learning for young people	3

<b>Information &amp; communications technology</b>	<b>3</b>
Contributory grades:	
Work-based learning for young people	3

<b>Retailing, customer service &amp; transportation</b>	<b>3</b>
Contributory grades:	
Work-based learning for young people	3

## KEY FINDINGS

### Achievement and standards

7. **Learners develop good skills in their workplaces.** They can relate their everyday work to the qualifications requirements of their programme. Many employers recognise and comment upon the benefits of training and the speed at which learners become competent. Learners are employed in real jobs that offer potential for career progression.

8. The achievement of key skills qualifications is generally good for the business administration, management and professional learners and the call-handling modern apprentices. Learners are well prepared for external tests and project work is used effectively. In some Intec training centres, more than 90 per cent of learners pass external tests at their first attempt.

9. Some business administration, management and professional learners' portfolios are outstanding. All learners' portfolios are generally of at least a satisfactory standard. They



contain an appropriate range of diverse evidence, including reports of observations, witness testimonies, case studies, written and oral questions and photographic evidence. However, some warehousing learners' portfolios contain insufficient evidence.

**10. The achievement level of modern apprenticeship frameworks is unsatisfactory.**

Retailing, customer service and transportation, which is Intec's largest training sector has the poorest achievement rate for modern apprenticeship frameworks. Despite improvements in 2003-04, the achievement rate is still only 25 per cent and 24 per cent for advanced modern apprentices and foundation modern apprentices, respectively. The best rate for modern apprenticeship achievements to date, is for the smallest area of learning. In 2003-04, 75 per cent of advanced modern apprentices in ICT, and 33 per cent of foundation modern apprentices completed their modern apprenticeship frameworks.

### Quality of education and training

11. Business administration, management and professional learners have good learning opportunities in the workplace. This includes being given different types of work in order to meet specific requirements of their programmes. Most employers ensure that learners have reasonable amounts of time to work on their portfolios and other training requirements. Examples include first-aid training, computer software courses, materials handling and telephone techniques.

12. In business administration, management and professional, some Intec training centres introduce key skills training early in learners' programmes and make good use of evidence available in the workplace. For example, one learner prepared and delivered a computerised presentation to her work colleagues, which was then recorded appropriately in her key skills portfolio.

13. At one centre, accountancy learners receive off-the-job training. This affects approximately 60 per cent of learners. The off-the-job training is good and uses an effective combination of individual support, with targeted assignments and group training. The training makes particularly effective use of simulation, for example when learners work on a company's accounts. All accountancy learners receive workplace visits from Intec staff and workplace support.

14. A recently introduced website on Intec's intranet provides learners with a good range of learning resources. This innovative project is being used effectively by an increasing number of learners. Activities include key skills practice tests and guidance notes about a range of topics. There are well-equipped ICT rooms in all training centres, which are easily accessible to learners. **Intec's ICT learners are well supported by staff.** A specialist assessor has been employed and other Intec staff are appropriately qualified.

**15. Short-term goal-setting for most business administration, management and professional learners is good.** Some new learners, or learners with particular needs, may be seen on an almost weekly basis. The precise targets are discussed in some detail and

are then clearly written up for the learners' use. The targets, which are well linked with programme requirements, are followed up on subsequent visits. Learners have a clear understanding of their immediate work, and respond positively to this direction.

**16. Retailing, customer service and transportation learners have very flexible and effective support from Intec staff.** This is particularly important for shift workers who need support consistent with their varied hours of work. Intec arranged much more frequent and additional visits to a group of learners due for redundancy, in order to monitor their achievements more quickly. Learners have good working relationships with their assessors and are able to speak to them about a wide range of vocational and pastoral issues.

**17. Intec has particularly good working relationships with a range of employers, from small local businesses to large, blue chip multinational corporations.** Many of these employers approach Intec to provide training, having had previous experience of training with them. Facilities within employers' premises are often made available for training. These include mechanical handling equipment, training rooms and access to company intranets. Career progression within employers is encouraged. **Most employers of ICT learners are not committed to the training programme.** Learners are not given sufficient time in the workplace to complete portfolio work and their employers do not view participation in the programme and support of learners as a priority.

**18. Key skills training is introduced too late into some retailing, customer service and transportation learners' programmes.** Training can be delayed for up to nine months, despite learners being in job roles which enable them to use their skills on a regular basis. Generally, key skills are now introduced earlier in learners' programmes, but this timing depends mainly on when learners attend the key skills workshops. Some learners still make slow progress towards key skills qualifications, although the call-handling learners' achievements of key skills qualifications are good.

**19. In business administration, management and professional, insufficient use is made of learners' initial assessment results.** Not all learners who need additional support are receiving it. During the initial assessment there is often too much emphasis on matching jobs and employers to qualifications and programmes, without reference to individual learners' needs. Many Intec staff do not have the specialist skills to give appropriate literacy and numeracy support. Initial assessment has improved for all learners since the previous inspection. It is now satisfactory. Key skills assessment used for identifying literacy and numeracy abilities is not adequate in retailing and necessitates further testing. Additional specialist support arrangements are satisfactory.

**20. Progress reviews for business administration, management and professional learners take place regularly, but are ineffective.** Health and safety and equality of opportunity issues are dealt with in a superficial manner. Intec staff do not involve employers sufficiently well in their learners' progress reviews and many write bland statements on the review forms. Intec staff do not offer enough employers the opportunity to participate in planning their learners' training or assessments. More able learners are not set sufficiently challenging targets, nor are they able to negotiate their own learning

schedules and improve their speed of achievement.

**21. Intec does not provide sufficient target-setting for retailing, customer service and transportation learners.** Individual learning plans and progress reviews do not set challenging targets. Assessment plans and action plans set when Intec staff visit learners' workplaces also have unchallenging targets. Where these targets are not met they are merely transferred to the next action plan, rather than actively pursuing the reasons for non-achievement.

### Leadership and management

**22. Intec's clear strategic objectives and targets are regularly reviewed by managers and effectively communicated to all staff.** A good range of scheduled meetings involves specific groups of managers and staff, which monitor and review Intec's operations in relation to its business objectives and targets for learners' achievements.

**23. Intec has good internal communications** and the regular meetings at all levels are well attended, effectively minuted and action points are made. Small, cohesive course teams exist within each learning centre and management information is used effectively to monitor learners' progress and completion of NVQ units. The national contracts staff, who are home-based, are incorporated well into the communication system by the use of e-mails and direct mailing on a regular basis.

**24. The company-wide target-setting and monitoring processes effectively involve all staff.** Intec's computerised management information system has been in operation since September 2003 and staff at all centres now use the available data. Learners' achievements are monitored monthly and the information is used to identify trends at local level and throughout the company. An NVQ database is used to record and monitor learners' progress. This alerts staff to learners who are nearing the end of their programmes without sufficient achievement being recorded. Action is then taken by training centre staff, who assign learners to 'at risk' registers, which reminds trainers/assessors that these learners need extra attention to ensure that they are retained and achieve their targets.

**25. Learners' success is celebrated well.** Training centres hold presentations twice each year and Intec's managing director presents certificates of achievement. Events are also held at employers' premises. Intec newsletters use particularly good-quality photographs of successful groups of learners, with positive comments from their employers' senior management. These measures help to motivate other learners in gaining their qualifications.

**26.** Intec has a comprehensive equality and diversity policy, which is reviewed regularly. Significant progress has been made in recent months, including staff training. New learning resources include an induction pack and video; equal opportunities assessments of learners' workplaces have also been introduced. Equality of opportunity is a regular agenda item for team and senior management meetings.

27. **Intec has taken some effective action to improve the quality of the provision.** The training centre managers' meetings, introduction of 'at risk' registers and the standardisation activities in the senior internal verifier meetings, are good examples of sharing good practice throughout the centres. However, the process is incomplete; meetings relating to the areas of learning are not regular enough and information is not effectively shared, or improvements made throughout the training centres.

28. **Arrangements for implementing improvements are not thorough enough.** Staff training and actions to tackle the learning processes as a whole, which have a direct effect upon learners' successes, are often omitted from development planning. Local action in Intec training centres resolves these problems in some instances.

29. **The formal monitoring of equal opportunities in the workplace is inadequate.** Staff do not receive sufficient training and guidance for them to make accurate judgements about using the new workplace equal opportunities vetting process, and to take appropriate action where arrangements are judged to be inadequate. Documents are often incomplete, or there is insufficient recorded information. Some learners' progress reviews do not monitor equal opportunities issues adequately.

30. **Intec's quality assurance arrangements are incomplete** and this is still having a direct and negative effect on some learners. Examples throughout the training provision, illustrate the varied quality of the learners' experience and that the quality assurance arrangements are not supporting improvements sufficiently. The key aspects of the learners' programmes are not quality assured effectively.

31. The company's quality assurance arrangements are not sufficient to monitor the work of staff in order to identify and resolve individual needs for support and/or training. Staff workloads vary, and many staff are multi-tasking with a wide range of learners who are engaged in a variety of programmes. Arrangements are not effective in resolving the inconsistent quality of learner progress reviews, target-setting, action-planning and taught sessions in some specialisms, throughout the provision. There is very little observation of Intec's staff working with learners.

32. Self-assessment effectively involves all staff. The revised, improved format for the 2004 development plan includes specific target dates, staff accountabilities and costings. However, monitoring processes are not operating effectively and identifying where inconsistencies occur. In some cases, the monitoring process or measurement of success is inappropriate.

33. Many of the weaknesses identified in the previous inspection regarding internal verification have been resolved. Internal verification is now generally strong and effective. There are still some problems with frequency of verification, identification of slow progress by learners, and support for assessors.

*During the reinspection process, the inspectors identified the following strengths and weaknesses:*

## **Leadership and management**

### **Strengths**

- clear strategic direction
- thorough company-wide target-setting and monitoring
- good celebration of success
- some effective actions to improve the quality of the provision

### **Weaknesses**

- insufficiently thorough arrangements to implement planned improvements
- inadequate formal monitoring of equal opportunities in the workplace
- incomplete quality assurance arrangements

## **Business administration, management & professional**

### **Strengths**

- good skills development by learners
- good off-the-job training for a significant number of accountancy learners
- good short-term goal setting
- good learning opportunities in learners' workplaces

### **Weaknesses**

- unsatisfactory achievement rate in modern apprenticeship frameworks
- insufficient use of initial assessment results to support learners
- ineffective progress reviews

## **Information & communications technology**

### **Strengths**

- good learner support by Intec staff

### **Weaknesses**

- insufficient commitment to training by employers

## **Retailing, customer service & transportation**

### **Strengths**

- good development of practical skills
- very effective additional learning support
- particularly good working relationships with employers
- good internal communications

### **Weaknesses**

- low achievement rate in modern apprenticeship frameworks
- insufficient target-setting with learners
- delayed introduction of key skills training for some learners

## DETAILED REINSPECTION FINDINGS

### LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

**Grade 3**

*During the reinspection process, the inspectors identified the following strengths and weaknesses:*

#### **Strengths**

- clear strategic direction
- thorough company-wide target-setting and monitoring
- good celebration of success
- some effective actions to improve the quality of the provision

#### **Weaknesses**

- insufficiently thorough arrangements to implement planned improvements
- inadequate formal monitoring of equal opportunities in the workplace
- incomplete quality assurance arrangements

34. Intec's three-year strategic plan for 2003-06 sets clear strategic objectives, which are regularly reviewed. The plan is effectively communicated to all staff, who receive copies. The one-year business plan, with detailed objectives and targets, is regularly reviewed by managers, and actions for improvement are identified. The senior management team meets eight times a year and there is a good range of other scheduled meetings, involving specific groups of managers and staff. The managing director is involved in the day-to-day management of the business.

35. The company-wide target-setting and monitoring processes effectively involve all staff. The range of scheduled meetings ensures that targets are reviewed regularly at different levels of management. Each training centre manager produces a monthly performance report, which includes progress against targets. Managers meet quarterly with the managing director to review their training centre's progress. The computerised management information system has been used throughout the company since September 2003 and enables staff to use data effectively. The achievements of learners are monitored monthly and used to identify trends at local level and throughout the company. An NVQ database is used to record and monitor learner progress. The staff appraisal system focuses on performance and training needs against individual targets. Intec has implemented many improvements, and its development plans, which are reviewed regularly, have clear action points, measurements of success and reviews of progress. For example, the improvements for internal verification are very detailed. The revised format for the 2004 development plan includes specific target dates, staff accountabilities and costings.

36. Learners' successes are celebrated well. Training centres hold presentations twice

each year and Intec's managing director presents certificates of achievement. Very good-quality photographs are taken. The marketing unit use these well to celebrate and promote learners' achievements in Intec newsletters, displays and in the local press. These photos are often accompanied by positive quotes by employers' senior managers, which motivate learners.

37. Arrangements for implementing improvements are not thorough enough. Staff training and actions to resolve identified weaknesses and to complete processes are not included in some development planning. However, in some instances, local action in Intec training centres resolves these issues. Weaknesses identified at the previous inspection, such as poor initial assessments have new procedures and resources; but there is no training for staff in how to use the results to plan individual learning programmes more effectively. Other examples of weak implementation include arrangements for resolving non-challenging target-setting for learners; the delayed introduction of key skills training; and inadequate support for unqualified assessors.

38. Achievements by learners have increased in all areas. However, Intec is still not fully implementing critical planning with staff, to improve all stages of learning in order to achieve the maximum effect on learners' successes and achievements.

### **Equality of opportunity**

### **Contributory grade 3**

39. Intec has a comprehensive equality and diversity policy, which is reviewed regularly. A director of the company has overall responsibility for equality and diversity issues and the company has a formal equality and diversity development plan. Significant progress has been made in recent months, including staff training. New learning resources, including an induction pack and video, have been introduced. Equal opportunities assessments of learners' workplaces are now carried out.

40. The collection and use of data is satisfactory. A range of data is recorded and analysed to identify trends in applications, the achievements of learners and those learners leaving the programme before completion, by gender, disability and ethnicity. Targets for recruiting more learners from under-represented groups are included in each training centre plan. Progress towards the achievement of these targets is monitored and analysed each month. Equal opportunities is a regular agenda item for team and senior management meetings. Some inaccuracies in the data have been identified in team meetings, and data analysis is not being used to support planning and managerial decisions.

41. Staff at some training centres maintain links with local community groups and attend careers events to promote training in local schools and colleges. Staff at other centres do not, following the providers' strategic decision to focus on recruiting employed learners through their employers. Marketing materials contain images of people from a range of cultural backgrounds. The number of learners with disabilities and of those learners from minority ethnic groups are broadly in line with LSC contract targets.

42. Learners' understanding of equal opportunities issues is generally satisfactory. This



was identified as a weakness at the previous inspection. Equality of opportunity is discussed with learners at induction and is also covered within some training programmes. Most learners are shown a training video during their induction which raises their awareness of a range of equal opportunities issues. Where inductions are carried out in the workplace the video is shown to learners later in their training programmes. At some training centres staff collect press cuttings and internet documents containing relevant items to use in discussions with learners. Learners are also provided with a copy of the equality and diversity information pack which contains comprehensive explanations of relevant legislation and regulations. Most learners are aware of the appeals and complaints procedures and have a satisfactory understanding of equal opportunities in relation to their work.

43. Intec has recently provided equal opportunities and diversity training for approximately 70 per cent of all staff. However, the company-wide three-year staff training and development plan does not feature equal opportunities training. Intec does not keep central records of staff attendance at equal opportunities training sessions. An evaluation of recent training is planned. Staff inductions do not contain sufficient information about equality of opportunity.

44. The formal monitoring of equality of opportunity in the workplace is inadequate. Assessors do use their frequent visits to ensure that learners are well treated in the workplace. Intec has recently introduced an annual assessment of employers' staff inductions and training practices to make an assessment of the workplace. However, some staff have not received sufficient training in order to make accurate judgements about employers' equality of opportunity provision. Staff do not receive sufficient guidance about the corrective measures needed to support learners where workplace arrangements are judged to be inadequate. Documents relating to these judgements are often incomplete or do not contain sufficient information. Some progress reviews do not monitor equality of opportunity sufficiently. Learners are asked questions regarding their treatment in the workplace but, in some cases, the questioning is superficial.

### **Quality assurance**

### **Contributory grade 4**

45. Intec has taken positive action in some areas to improve the quality of provision. All training centres have regular monthly team meetings at which quality issues are discussed. These meetings identify actions to resolve identified issues. At one training centre, for example, information from questionnaires highlighted the need to involve employers. This led to the creation of regular employer forum meetings. Such actions have improved the percentage of learners gaining qualifications from 8 per cent to 18 per cent in just under nine months. Team meetings at the training centres are well recorded and actions are identified and monitored. The centres use the action-planning process effectively. The process to achieve company-wide quality improvements is less clear and it is not apparent which meetings are intended to deal with specific issues.

46. Actions to improve retention and achievement rates include good use in local centres of 'at risk' registers which record any issues which are likely to affect learners and influence whether or not they remain on programme. Learners now do not start their

## INTEC BUSINESS COLLEGES PLC REINSPECTION

training programmes until they have satisfactorily completed their probationary periods in employment.

47. During the previous inspection, weaknesses were identified in the internal verification process. Many of these have since been rectified and internal verification is now generally strong and effective. Concerns remain about slow learner progress not being identified and resolved by the internal verification process; infrequent internal verification in retailing; and inadequate support for some warehousing and administration assessors. However, there are clear and detailed descriptions of how internal verification processes should be carried out in all training centres and assessors are made aware of these. Internal verification at every centre is checked by the senior internal verifier. Regular standardisation meetings take place in all areas of learning to share assessment issues among training centres.

48. Overall, Intec's quality assurance arrangements are incomplete. Scheduled arrangements include meetings, audits, observations, reviews, standardisation activities, learner and employer surveys, and staff training events. However, there are examples throughout the provision which illustrate the varied quality of learners' experiences and that the quality assurance arrangements are not supporting improvements sufficiently. The key aspects of the learners' programmes are not quality assured effectively. Intec relies heavily on informal and piecemeal monitoring arrangements. There are some observations of learning, but these are not systematic, regular or effective. Quality assurance management visits to centres are informal and not sufficiently focused. The formal, yearly internal audits focus predominantly on the financial and administrative aspects of the programmes, rather than the learner-related work. In addition, these audits are largely restricted to checking that relevant paperwork has been completed.

49. Intec has insufficient arrangements to quality assure the work of staff, in order to identify and deal with individual's need for further support and/or training. Staff workloads vary, and many are multi-tasking with a wide range of learners who are on different programmes. Intec uses staff as trainers and assessors for the same learners. Quality assurance arrangements are not effective in rectifying the inconsistent quality of learner progress reviews, target-setting, action-planning and taught sessions in some specialisms, throughout the provision. Intec is aware of many of these shortcomings and is currently working with an external consultant to produce a set of standard operating procedures to cover all aspects of the company's operations. The first draft of the administrative and financial standard operating procedures has recently been completed.

50. The self-assessment process effectively involves all members of staff. The most recent report is dated January 2004 and identifies many of the strengths and weaknesses found by inspectors, although there were no strengths or weaknesses relating to quality assurance. The process is led by the quality assurance manager, who receives information from the staff at all training centres. Senior managers write a first draft which is circulated to all staff for their comments, which are then incorporated into the final version where appropriate. However, for the area of learning representing over 50 per cent of Intec learners, the previous inspection grade did not improve at self-assessment

or reinspection. In addition, throughout the provision, many weaknesses relating directly to the quality of the learners' experience and achievement remain. Intec does not recognise the significant negative impact of incomplete quality assurance arrangements.

51. The revised and improved format for the 2004 development plan includes specific target dates, staff accountabilities and costings. However, the monitoring processes are not operating effectively enough to identify where inconsistencies occur. In some cases, the monitoring process or measurement of success is inappropriate.

## AREAS OF LEARNING

### Business administration, management & professional

Grade 3

Programmes inspected	Number of learners	Contributory grade
Work-based learning for young people	366	3

*During the reinspection process, the inspectors identified the following strengths and weaknesses:*

#### Strengths

- good skills development by learners
- good off-the-job training for a significant number of accountancy learners
- good short-term goal setting
- good learning opportunities in learners' workplaces

#### Weaknesses

- unsatisfactory achievement rate in modern apprenticeship frameworks
- insufficient use of initial assessment results to support learners
- ineffective progress reviews

#### Achievement and standards

52. Many learners who have recently begun training programmes are making rapid progress and Intec staff set learners both long- and short-term targets for the completion of NVQ units. Key skills achievements on the modern apprenticeship programmes are good. Retention is satisfactory throughout all programmes.

53. At 31 per cent, achievement rates are unsatisfactory for both advanced and foundation modern apprenticeship frameworks. The previous inspection identified this as a weakness, as did Intec's latest self-assessment report. However, the situation is improving. Using Intec's leavers' achievement data for the same LSC periods 1-8 in 2002-03 and 2003-04, the achievement rates for advanced modern apprentices is 3 per cent better and for foundation modern apprentices has improved by 13 per cent. At 31 per cent, this currently matches the 2002-03 rates for advanced modern apprentices and has already exceeded the previous rate for foundation modern apprentices of 24 per cent. The NVQ programme achievement rate has increased from 54 per cent to 57 per cent, which already is higher than for the whole of 2002-03, which was 41 per cent. The number of leavers achieving an NVQ, including all programmes, has increased to 55 per cent to date, for 2003-04, which exceeds the same period in 2002-03 by 5 per cent and the figure for the whole year of 46 per cent.

## Quality of education and training

54. Learners' skills development is good. Intec staff visit learners' workplaces regularly. They successfully help learners to link their work to the NVQ requirements and learners' skills improve rapidly. Learners are encouraged to use a good range of evidence in the production of their portfolios. Portfolios are generally of a good standard, and some are outstanding. The quality of portfolios was recognised as a strength at the previous inspection. Some key skills results are very good. A number of Intec training centres have more than 90 per cent of their learners passing external tests at their first attempt. NVQ unit accreditation is carried out regularly. Most learners are motivated and keen to improve their personal and professional competences. A few learners are making slow progress and are approaching the end of their programme with no unit NVQ achievement. Most of these learners have been with the provider for some time.

55. At one centre, learners receive off-the-job training in accountancy. This affects approximately 60 per cent of the learners and the training is good. It is delivered by well-qualified staff, who have current accountancy skills and are competent tutors. Resources are good. Learners are issued with appropriate textbooks early on in their programmes and these are used appropriately. Worksheets and practice examination papers are used effectively. Work is marked promptly and regularly. Training accommodation is spacious, bright and well equipped. All accountancy learners are supported in their workplaces.

56. Short-term goal setting for most learners is good and this was recognised as a strength at the previous inspection. Intec staff visit most learners in their workplace very regularly. Most learners are seen once a month, although some new learners, or learners with particular needs, may be seen on an almost weekly basis. The visits generally result in precise targets for the learners which are discussed in some detail and then clearly written up for the learners' use. The targets, which are well linked to programme requirements, are followed up on subsequent visits. Learners have a clear understanding of their immediate work requirements and respond positively to this direction. However, some learners are not visited frequently and their targets are vague and are not well recorded.

57. Learners have good learning opportunities in the workplace. Most employers are very supportive. They ensure that learners are allowed reasonable time to work on their portfolios and other training requirements. Supervisors offer advice and encouragement. Learners feel valued as employees and welcome their employers' recognition of their efforts on the Intec programmes. Intec staff are good at supporting their learners, making sure that learners are often given different types of work by their employers so that they can meet specific programme requirements. Most learners are given regular time off work to attend workshops and training days at Intec premises. However, one Intec training centre has some major employers that are reluctant to allow learners the time for off-the-job key skills training. Intec staff have responded by giving these learners additional workplace support and most learners have eventually achieved their key skills qualifications. Many learners have received additional training, either from

## INTEC BUSINESS COLLEGES PLC REINSPECTION

their employers or Intec. Examples include first-aid training, computer software courses, materials handling and telephone techniques.

58. Most Intec training centres have good resources, but some resources are not used sufficiently. Adequate learning materials are used effectively with employed learners in the workplace. A recently introduced website on Intec's intranet provides learners with a range of learning resources. This innovative project is being used effectively by an increasing number of learners. There are well-equipped ICT rooms in all centres, which are easily accessible to learners. However, in some training centres, Intec staff are not adequately qualified and do not have sufficient recent, relevant industrial experience. Continuous professional development is satisfactory but not prioritised effectively by Intec managers.

59. The management and delivery of key skills training has improved for most learners since the previous inspection. Key skills are taught either in the workplace or in off-the-job workshops at local Intec centres. These workshops are well planned and resourced, although attendance is low at some centres. Learners are well prepared for external tests. Project work is used effectively. Staff from some Intec centres introduce key skills training early in learners' programmes and make good use of workplace evidence. However, these initiatives are too recent to have had any effect on achievement rates.

60. Most Intec centres provide a reasonable range of courses which meets employers' and learners' needs. For example, significant efforts have been made by Intec to customise management programmes to meet employers' organisational requirements. Some learners are promoted to positions of responsibility. Intec recruits learners with a wide variety of abilities and diverse expectations, by targeting employers with their marketing strategy. Good partnership arrangements exist between most employers and Intec, and communications are generally good.

61. Intec does not make sufficient use of the results of learners' initial assessments. At the previous inspection, initial assessments were judged to be unsatisfactory. Overall, the identification of initial skills levels is now satisfactory. However, not all learners who need additional support are receiving it. In most Intec centres the accounts manager carries out a thorough initial assessment before allocating the learner to an assessor/trainer. There is often too much emphasis on matching jobs and employers to qualifications and programmes, without reference to individual learners' needs. When initial assessment results show that learners have literacy and numeracy support needs they are not used appropriately and effectively. Intec's strategy for learners who need additional literacy and numeracy support is usually to send them to the nearest local college, as only one training centre has specialist staff to provide support. One management learner, with severe numeracy support needs, has been provided with a specialist mentor.

62. Progress reviews take place regularly but are ineffective. Intec recognises reviews as a weakness in its self-assessment report and reviews were noted as an area for improvement at the previous inspection. Learners are unclear about the purpose of the review process. Health and safety and equality of opportunity issues are dealt with in a

superficial manner. This is despite Intec staff having recently attended equal opportunities and diversity training. Learners' personal development issues are not included in the reviews and there is insufficient focus on celebrating personal achievements. For example, several learners in new jobs have learnt complex specialist software packages. This has not been recorded in the progress review process.

63. Intec staff do not involve employers sufficiently in learners' progress reviews and many write bland statements on the review forms. Intec staff do not offer enough employers the opportunity to help plan their learners' training or assessments. Long-term target-setting is taking place, but there is not enough focus on the individual learners' needs and workplace opportunities. The more able learners are not set sufficiently challenging targets. They are not given the opportunity to negotiate their own learning schedules and improve their pace of achievement.

### **Leadership and management**

64. The business administration, management and professional area of learning is managed well in some Intec training centres. There are small cohesive course teams within each centre and communications are good. Management information is used effectively in centres to monitor learners' progress and completion of NVQ units. Each training centre has a course manual which contains all data relevant to the programme, copies of procedures and details of staffing resources. Staff all have annual appraisals, with time-constrained, measurable targets which are monitored on a monthly basis. Staff development is linked to appraisals and all assessors and trainers are required to keep a professional development file showing courses attended and their relevance to the training process.

65. Some good practice is shared among training centres, particularly through the training centre managers' meetings and the standardisation activities in senior internal verifier meetings. However, this process is incomplete as meetings relating to each area of learning do not take place frequently enough. Communications with learners' work-based supervisors have improved, supported by regular workplace visits and an improved information pack for employers. In addition, all supervisors are now required to complete a form detailing the opportunities for learners to gather workplace evidence for the qualifications. Internal verification is systematic and uses the Intec company procedures. It has improved from being a weakness at three of the training centres at the previous inspection. However, quality assurance arrangements do not identify and resolve some negative issues. Inductions, progress reviews and training are not monitored on a regular basis.



**Information & communications technology****Grade 3**

Programmes inspected	Number of learners	Contributory grade
Work-based learning for young people	14	3

*During the reinspection process, the inspectors identified the following strengths and weaknesses:*

**Strengths**

- good learner support by Intec staff

**Weaknesses**

- insufficient commitment to training by employers

**Achievement and standards**

66. Learners are developing skills which are appropriate and relevant in the workplace. For example, one learner is currently carrying out a major installation project with their employer, and a foundation modern apprentice has produced a new health and safety booklet which is being used across their company. Learners are developing confidence in their abilities to work autonomously on a series of complex tasks. They produce well-managed portfolios with a wide range of evidence presented in a variety of formats. The standard of work produced is high. Learners following the install and support programme, use photographic evidence to capture the dismantling and reassembly of computer hardware, step by step.

67. Intec records modern apprenticeship and NVQ achievements against leavers. In ICT the number of learners involved is small. Using comparative LSC periods 1-8, there has been a significant improvement in advanced modern apprenticeship achievements, from zero in 2002-03 to 75 per cent in 2003-04. Achievement rates for foundation modern apprenticeship and NVQ programmes remain constant at 33 per cent and 100 per cent, respectively. The NVQ achievement rate for all learners, however, has declined from 75 per cent in 2002-03 to 53 per cent in 2003-04.

**Quality of education and training**

68. Learners are well supported by Intec staff, who are enthusiastic and encourage learners with their programmes. Intec has employed a specialist assessor for three learners who transferred to Intec from another training provider. This was especially important as the learners' own employer did not have the necessary technical expertise required for them to complete their NVQs. Other Intec staff are appropriately qualified. The new Intec learners' website enables all learners to have access to learning and support materials at any time. Each training centre is well resourced, with modern computers, industry-standard software and learning materials which the learners can use



on a drop-in basis, and when they attend for key skills workshops. All learners are screened for literacy, numeracy and language skills, but none currently require additional support.

69. Intec assessors visit learners' workplaces every two to four weeks, depending on the learners' needs and the level of their employer's support. Learners are encouraged to telephone or e-mail their assessor with any concerns or problems. Assessment in the workplace is satisfactory, with a variety of techniques used to assess each learner, including photographic evidence, observations and witness statements. Assessment feedback to the learner is comprehensive. Short- and long-term targets for assessment are discussed with the learner and have improved since the previous inspection.

70. Learners know what is good about their evidence, or where they need to improve or increase the amount of evidence. Where witness statements are used, their authenticity is confirmed with the signatory of the statement. Cross-referencing the assessments to the NVQ standards allows the learners to see exactly what progress they have made and how much work is needed for them to complete their programmes. Learners are able to identify opportunities for evidence-gathering over and above that suggested by the Intec assessor. Some learners make slow progress despite their prior learning and achievements. Intec increases the frequency of assessor visits as learners near their completion dates. Learners who do not complete their programmes on target continue to be supported by Intec staff, with significantly enhanced support from assessors, until qualifications are achieved. Internal verification is generally satisfactory with in-depth feedback to the assessors about their judgments. However, internal verification is not rectifying slow progress by some learners.

71. Most employers are not committed to the learners' training programmes. Their learners are not given sufficient time in the workplace to complete portfolio work. These employers are not sufficiently involved when Intec staff visit the workplaces. For example, they are not always present during important discussions and often give a minimum response on the assessment or progress review documents. One employer interviewed felt that training was solely Intec's responsibility. Another employer was seldom on site, while a third offered no relevant training opportunities for its learners.

## **Leadership and management**

72. Intec staff attend regular meetings at their local training centres. Training and development issues are discussed. Meetings are well minuted, with actions planned and reviewed at subsequent meetings. Attention is given to individual learners' progress at these meetings. Good practice is not shared sufficiently in ICT, which is especially significant as there are very few learners at each training centre. Some improvements to sharing have recently been made at some training centres. Assessors attend regular standardisation meetings to ensure that assessment is consistent for all centres. Internal verification also takes place across training centres. This is achieved either by visiting internal verifiers from other Intec centres, or by documents being sent to another Intec centre. Delays are experienced at times when sending documents to other centres.

**Retailing, customer service & transportation****Grade 3**

Programmes inspected	Number of learners	Contributory grade
Work-based learning for young people	510	3

*During the reinspection process, the inspectors identified the following strengths and weaknesses:*

**Strengths**

- good development of practical skills
- very effective additional learning support
- particularly good working relationships with employers
- good internal communications

**Weaknesses**

- low achievement rate in modern apprenticeship frameworks
- insufficient target-setting with learners
- delayed introduction of key skills training for some learners

**Achievement and standards**

73. Learners demonstrate a range of good, practical skills. This was not recognised in the company's self-assessment report. Learners are involved in work that is challenging and they develop good business skills. Many learners work in modern, well-equipped busy offices. For example, one receptionist is able to operate a complex switchboard, manage multiple calls and deal with customers efficiently. Learners deal with problems and respond confidently to customer complaints. They develop administrative and IT skills which are used well in the workplace. Intec staff provide additional training to enhance learners' jobsearch prospects. Some learners progress to higher-level qualifications and some warehousing learners are now working towards team leader qualifications. Employers recognise and comment upon the benefits of training and the speed at which learners become competent. Modern apprentices work in call centres is valued by their employers. Learners are employed in real work that offers potential for career progression. Learners are making satisfactory progress on their programmes and the standard of their work in assessment portfolios is also satisfactory.

74. Retention rates are satisfactory. Improvements were identified at the previous inspection. Intec has implemented a series of measures to help with these improvements. 'At risk' registers have been introduced to all sites, and are used effectively. The registers record any issues which are likely to affect learners and influence whether they remain on programme. Learners do not begin their training programmes until they have satisfactorily completed their probationary employment periods.

75. The rate of modern apprenticeship framework completion remains low. The previous inspection identified this as a weakness, as did Intec's latest self-assessment report. Using Intec's achievement of leavers data for LSC periods 1-8, during 2002-03, 30 per cent of advanced modern apprentices and 10 per cent of foundation modern apprentices achieved their modern apprenticeship frameworks. For the same period in 2003-04, the advanced modern apprenticeship achievement rate declined to 25 per cent and the foundation modern apprenticeship achievement rate improved to 24 per cent. The most significant improvement has been for NVQ programmes for period 1-8, as this has improved from 55 per cent to 82 per cent. However, less than 12 per cent of the total number of learners in this area are on NVQ programmes and 71 per cent of these are based at one Intec training centre.

### **Quality of education and training**

76. Intec provides very effective additional learning support. This is particularly important in this area of learning because shift workers need support during the varied hours they work. Learners are able to have more work placement visits by assessors to help them complete their qualifications at an early stage. One major company, in the process of making all staff redundant, had several NVQ learners. Intec arranged much more frequent and additional visits to provide the individual support required to monitor the achievement of qualifications more quickly. Learners have good working relationships with their assessors and are able to speak to them about a wide range of vocational and pastoral issues.

77. Since the previous inspection, Intec has improved what was an inadequate initial assessment process. This is now satisfactory. The results of initial assessments are now routinely shared with most learners. Support needs are accurately identified and recorded, with a clear indication of how support will be given. Intec staff carry out initial assessments which analyse learners' job roles accurately, involving employers well in this process. The accreditation of prior learning and achievement is also used effectively. Intec uses the key skills initial assessment to identify learners' literacy and numeracy needs. However, this process is inadequate for the purpose and additional tests are given dependent on the marks obtained in the key skills tests. Where further tests identify support requirements these are provided by increasing the support for individuals. Where learners require specialist support, for example for dyslexia, this is provided by external agencies.

78. Intec has particularly good working relationships with a range of employers, from small local businesses to large, blue chip multinational corporations. Many of these employers approach Intec to provide training, often having had previous experience of training with Intec. Employers are effectively involved in training. Assessor meetings with learners are co-ordinated with the employer and learners' progress is discussed with them. Employers and learners are flexible in their arrangements for assessor visits. Night-shift workers and supervisors attend before their shifts begin, to meet with the assessors. Learners making slow progress are offered mentors, trained by the employer. Facilities

## INTEC BUSINESS COLLEGES PLC REINSPECTION

within employers' premises are made available for training; these include mechanical handling equipment, training rooms and access to company intranets. Time is allocated by employers to enable learners to build their portfolios. Career progression within employers is also encouraged; for example, some learners have been promoted to supervisors and work towards a team leader qualification. This strength was recognised in the self-assessment report.

79. Overall, resources are satisfactory. The Intec centres are easily accessible for learners being mostly in town centres. Most have computer suites with plenty of hardware and software. Training rooms are adequately resourced with light projectors, flip charts, facilities to produce slide shows and air-conditioning. Learners are issued with professionally prepared corporate Intec files for their portfolios. These provide introductions to assessment procedures and other useful texts. In addition learners are given induction packs which now include learning styles questionnaires and equal opportunities and diversity booklets. The company website is available to all learners. Learners are given a password and can use the website for a range of activities which include key skills practice tests and guidance notes about a range of topics. Assessors are occupationally competent and appropriately qualified.

80. The assessment of learners is generally satisfactory. Portfolios contain an appropriate range of diverse evidence, including reports of observations, witness testimonies, case studies, written and oral questions and photographic evidence. Most assessments are accurately recorded, and learners are involved to some extent in referencing evidence to national standards. Some assessment planning is not detailed enough and does not always meet national standards for assessment. Warehousing assessment at one training centre is a concern and some learners' portfolios contain very little evidence. Some assessors who carry out a lot of independent work are not monitored sufficiently.

81. Intec does not provide enough target-setting for learners. Poor target-setting was a weakness at the previous inspection. Intec's latest self-assessment report also recognises that targets are not challenging enough. Individual learning plans do not record any targets for key skills achievements, other than a final completion date. Targets are not set for the achievement of the main qualification or additional units. Progress reviews do not set challenging targets for learners. Despite some recent improvements encouraging learning goals to be identified, these still do not include specific and challenging targets. Assessment plans and action plans drawn up when Intec staff visit learners' workplaces also have unchallenging targets. Where these targets are not met, they are merely transferred to the next action plan, rather than the reasons for non-achievement being actively pursued.

82. Intec introduces key skills too late into some learners' programmes. Traditionally, key skills training started after completion of the main NVQ. Completion of key skills qualifications was based on projects and assignments which were not relevant to the workplace. Intec has made improvements, such as the key skills projects which are now realistic and linked to job roles in the workplace. Key skills training is introduced earlier in learners' programmes, but the timing depends mainly on when learners attend the key

skills workshops. Some learners wait up to nine months, despite being in job roles which enable them to use key skills on a regular basis. Some learners are still making slow progress in achieving their key skills qualifications.

83. Learners working for call-handling qualifications receive key skills training early in their programmes and are able to identify and produce work-based evidence to build their portfolios of evidence. Intec provides key skills workshops, but some learners are not able to attend because of the travelling distances involved.

### **Leadership and management**

84. Internal communications are good. Effective monthly staff meetings held in each training centre cover many issues, including learners' training, and matters arising from the monthly senior managers meetings. All staff attend fortnightly team meetings raising specific issues relating to job roles. Meetings are well attended, effectively minuted and action points taken. Communications between training centres are regular and effective; training events take place during which staff from different centres work together and share good practice. Recent staff training included a session about equality of opportunity and diversity. Learners have a satisfactory understanding and recognise the importance of respecting diversity.

85. The national contracts staff, who are home-based, are incorporated well into the communication system by the use of e-mails and directed mailing on a regular basis. Intec appraises staff annually and makes good use of management information to set targets for training and learner achievements. These are effectively monitored as part of a short-term review carried out after six months. All staff are issued with a copy of the company's three-year strategic development plan. Company newsletters are used to keep staff up to date with developments, which is especially important as there are many lone workers in this area of learning. Staff are confident in using the communication structure to feed back comments about systems and procedures, and to suggest improvements to senior managers. This strength was recognised in Intec's most recent self-assessment report.

86. Some weaknesses remain in this area of learning and directly affect learners. Quality assurance arrangements are not fully implemented in every Intec centre and individual learners can have very different experiences of Intec. Internal verification is mostly satisfactory; there is a procedure and a new guide. Each learning centre's senior internal verifier attends regular company meetings which include standardisation activities. These senior verifiers are responsible for their centre's internal verifiers and assessors. Internal verification is planned and carried out at each training centre. It includes some observations on assessors and written feedback to help improve assessment practice. However, some poor assessment practice is not being resolved. The area of learning grade remains the same as that of the previous inspection in both the self-assessment report and the reinspection report.