

# INSPECTION REPORT

## **Harlow Information Technology Centre (1992) Ltd**

**11 September 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 and Jobcentre Plus programmes. 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
- **learnirect** provision
- Adult and Community Learning
- training 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.

## Overall judgement

Where the overall judgement is that the provision is adequate, only those aspects of the provision which are less than satisfactory will be reinspected.

Provision will normally be deemed to be inadequate where:

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

This provision will be subject to a full reinspection.

The final decision as to whether the provision is inadequate rests with the Chief Inspector of Adult Learning. A statement as to whether the provision is adequate or not is included in the summary section of the inspection report.

# INSPECTION REPORT

## Harlow Information Technology Centre (1992) Ltd

### Contents

#### Summary

Description of the provider	1
Scope of provision	1
About the inspection	3
Overall judgement	3
Grades	3
Key findings	4
What learners like about Harlow Information Technology Centre (1992) Ltd	10
What learners think Harlow Information Technology Centre (1992) Ltd could improve	10
Key challenges for Harlow Information Technology Centre (1992) Ltd	11

#### Detailed inspection findings

Leadership and management	12
Equality of opportunity	14
Quality assurance	14
Business administration, management & professional	16
Information & communications technology	20
Foundation programmes	24

## INSPECTION REPORT

### DESCRIPTION OF THE PROVIDER

1. Harlow Information Technology Centre (1992) Ltd (Harlow ITeC) was established in 1983 and is a private limited company with charitable status. It offers work-based learning for young people on foundation and advanced modern apprenticeships and programmes leading to national vocational qualifications (NVQs). Harlow ITeC has just introduced Entry to Employment (E2E) programmes to take the place of Life Skills and preparatory training. Most learners on these programmes are based at the ITeC centre. The company also offers courses in business administration, information technology (IT), customer service and call handling.
2. Harlow ITeC's board was reformed in 2002 to link it more closely with the company's aims and objectives. The management team is made up of the ITeC centre manager, the curriculum manager, and the IT systems manager, whose role focuses on technical support. There are 18 full-time, three part-time and three sessional staff.
3. Harlow ITeC works with a range of partner organisations including the local further education college. Its work-based learning provision is funded through the Essex Learning and Skills Council (LSC). The company provides commercial training for the industry sector and private individuals, and is one of the partners in a local learndirect initiative. Harlow ITeC has recently started an employer training pilot project sponsored by Essex LSC. This is intended to test new approaches to working with employers and their employees to improve the qualifications of adults in the workforce. Eight of the 11 learners were not included in the scope of this inspection. Three learners were interviewed and evidence from these interviews was taken into account by inspectors. No separate grade was given for the project.

### SCOPE OF PROVISION

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

4. Harlow ITeC offers NVQ training and foundation and advanced modern apprenticeships in business administration. There are 27 learners, of whom seven are advanced modern apprentices, 17 are foundation modern apprentices and three are working towards NVQs, one on level 3 and two on level 2. In addition, an NVQ in accounting is offered through subcontracted arrangements with a local college. All the advanced modern apprentices are employed by local companies. Most learners are recruited from school or college. Some are referred by Connexions and some apply directly. Unemployed learners take an initial aptitude test and attend an interview before being accepted. Approximately half the foundation modern apprentices are employed. Those who are not usually attend the training centre for a short initial period before being allocated to a work placement. Modern apprentices attend the training centre for literacy, numeracy, key skills and technical certificate sessions and computer training. Non-employed learners have a progress review within one month of starting their work

placement. All modern apprentices are assessed every three weeks.

### **Information & communications technology**

5. Harlow ITeC has 10 learners on information and communications technology (ICT) programmes. There are seven foundation modern apprentices following programmes in installing and supporting IT systems, and one in using IT. Two learners are working towards an NVQ at level 2 in installing and supporting IT systems. Learners on the foundation modern apprenticeship and NVQ programmes are in work placements or are employed in local companies. Learners receive an initial period of training to prepare them for work. Off-the-job training is provided at Harlow ITeC. Additional off-the-job training can be arranged by agreement with workplace supervisors and Harlow ITeC. Assessors visit the workplace every three weeks. Learners' progress reviews include the learner, their employer and an assessor.

### **Foundation programmes**

6. On the 1 August 2003, E2E replaced Life Skills, preparatory training and other training at level 1 on the work-based learning route. E2E is designed to meet the learners' individual needs and has no time limit. There are 28 learners on the E2E programme. Before the changeover, five of the learners were on Life Skills training programmes and 22 were on preparatory training. One learner joined the E2E programme in August.

7. Most Life Skills learners were referred by Connexions. Most learners on preparatory training were recruited from school or college. Some had been in employment for a brief period. As part of their programme, these learners were receiving some form of computer training.

8. Learners on the E2E programme are divided into three groups: general, administration and IT. The administration group's focus is on the acquisition of skills such as telephone techniques and customer service, but they also receive computer application training. The IT group focuses on training in computer applications, maintenance and recycling. Learners in the administration and IT groups have the opportunity to follow accredited computer courses. Most learners in the general group were previously on the Life Skills programme. Their programme concentrates on confidence-building, re-engagement and the development of personal and social skills.

9. All learners may choose from a variety of modules, including interview techniques, curriculum vitae writing, team-working, money management, communications, IT skills, and health. The health module includes sessions on drug and alcohol misuse, sexual health and healthy eating. There is also an opportunity to experience appropriate work tasters, once learners are adequately prepared. Learners take part in activities such as theatre, music and outdoor pursuits. There are established links with the local further education college and other E2E providers which give learners opportunities to progress. All learners are interviewed before joining the programme. They are given information on the course content and the support available, internally and from external agencies.

## ABOUT THE INSPECTION

Number of inspectors	5
Number of inspection days	20
Number of learner interviews	36
Number of staff interviews	25
Number of employer interviews	8
Number of locations/sites/learning centres visited	15

## OVERALL JUDGEMENT

10. The quality of the provision is not adequate to meet the reasonable needs of those receiving it. More specifically, Harlow ITeC's leadership and management and foundation provision are unsatisfactory. Its arrangements for equal opportunities and quality assurance are satisfactory. The work-based learning for young people in ICT is good, and in business administration it is satisfactory.

## GRADES

*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	3

<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>2</b>
Contributory grades:	
Work-based learning for young people	2

<b>Foundation programmes</b>	<b>4</b>
Contributory grades:	
Life Skills	4

## KEY FINDINGS

### Achievement and standards

11. **Learners on business administration programmes develop very good office and personal skills.** Many foundation modern apprentices gain employment, some before the target date for completion of their programme. Some learners achieve additional computer qualifications. **The retention and achievement rates for foundation modern apprentices are poor and falling.** All the learners who have been retained, have achieved the full modern apprenticeship framework. Retention and achievement rates for advanced modern apprenticeships are satisfactory. Retention and achievement rates are poor for NVQ programmes with only 33 per cent of learners achieving in 2001-02.

12. **Retention and achievement rates for IT modern apprentices are good.** In 2001-02, 70 per cent of learners achieved the foundation modern apprenticeship framework and in 2000-01 the figure was 75 cent. The learners make good progress into employment. Achievement rates for advanced modern apprentices were 100 per cent in 2001-02 and 83 per cent in 2000-01. All the learners who achieved their qualifications went into employment. Achievement rates for learners on NVQ programmes are satisfactory.

13. **The retention rate on the Life Skills programme is poor.** In 2002-03, only 22 per cent of learners were retained. The preparatory training programme started in 2002 with 68 learners. Of these, 40 have successfully completed and 22 have been transferred on to E2E programmes. **Learners on foundation programmes achieve a good range of life and work skills, and those who are retained make good progress on to level 2 programmes.**

### Quality of education and training

14. All seven learning sessions observed were satisfactory or better. Four were good and one was very good.

15. **There is good teaching on foundation programmes.** Staff are well prepared and use a range of strategies to develop learners' skills and enhance their learning. There is positive reinforcement for learners who become disruptive or disengaged. Learners enjoy their lessons and feel they are making progress. There is mutual respect between learners and staff. Learners are offered a wide range of additional activities while on programme, and there is good use of additional funding for educational visits.

16. **There are effective working relationships between employers and foundation learners.** Some employers come to the training centre and teach sessions on aspects of working life. Employers offer work tasters to learners who have been carefully selected by Harlow ITeC's staff. Some learners have benefited from real work experience.

17. **Business administration resources are good.** Staff are well qualified and experienced. They frequently attend external training to update their qualifications and occupational competence. Training rooms are well equipped with sufficient

workstations. Learning materials are well developed and industry related. There are good work placements available to learners.

**18. Learners on IT modern apprenticeships have very good work placements, most of which have been secured by Harlow ITeC.** Learners are very pleased with the work placements, which offer them good opportunities to achieve their qualifications. There is very good support from workplace supervisors. They understand the requirements of the programme and make every effort to help the learner to succeed. Employers confirmed that IT learners are well prepared for work placements.

**19. There is good assessment for all modern apprentices.** It is carried out at regular intervals. Assessors and learners complete detailed assessment plans that lead to realistic short-term targets being set. Assessors' observations are supported by witness statements from supervisors and workplace colleagues. There is good internal verification. Learners' prior achievements are accredited. Assessors are qualified and occupationally competent. There are comprehensive assessment and internal verification records. Assessors are observed regularly, and kept up to date through feedback and regular meetings. The assessment sampling plan is good.

**20. Learners on IT programmes are offered good pastoral support.** They are given an effective introduction into the world of work. They are aware of the complaints and appeals procedures, and any issues are resolved quickly. Learners progressing from foundation programmes are well prepared. All learners are offered extra coursework if required.

**21. Staff do not fully understand the key skills requirements of the advanced modern apprenticeship programme in business administration.** Learners spend a lot of time completing key skills projects which are not related to their work. Evidence of learners' communications skills is not collected from the workplace. Employers interviewed were unclear about what key skills units learners need to complete.

**22. Initial assessment is inadequate for learners on foundation programmes.** It does not inform staff of individual learners' needs in enough detail. Some learners have had a basic screening for literacy and numeracy but there has been no discussion about other factors that may affect their progress. The results of initial assessments are not always used in learners' individual development plans. The plans are not routinely used to set clear targets for learners. When targets are set they tend to be too general and narrowly focused. Learners' individual development plans are inadequate.

**23. Although members of staff have attended E2E information conferences, Harlow ITeC's planning for the change from Life Skills and preparatory training to E2E has been unsatisfactory.** Many learners are confused about the transition and its effect on their training. Staff are using inadequate paperwork.

**24.** For learners on foundation programmes, there is an informal system of pastoral support. However, there is no regular timetabled opportunity for learners to meet staff confidentially and discuss their own personal and programme needs. The support given

is not usually recorded.

## Leadership and management

25. Managers have actively pursued the development of partnerships. There are strong links with the local further education college. Staff have good knowledge of the local employment market and long-term connections with employers. They also collaborate with other training providers to share information and good practice. The board of trustees includes members from a wide variety of local educational and commercial organisations.

26. **Staff appraisal and development is good.** Staff development plans clearly record details of their training and qualifications, including the duration and timescales for training. New knowledge and skills gained through training are evaluated after a period of time. Staff are encouraged to work towards, or have achieved, a wide range of appropriate skills and qualifications. These include IT and teaching qualifications, and short courses in health and safety. However, there have been inadequate arrangements for staff awareness training in equality of opportunity.

27. **There is a good supply of networked computers and related IT equipment at the training centre.** Good use is made of old computers, which are refurbished and used for practising technical skills. There is access to a range of adaptive technologies for learners with specific learning difficulties or disabilities.

28. Learners interviewed confirmed their understanding of equal opportunities. **The induction to equal opportunities is good and interactive.** Some learners have carried out further research into the subject and presented their findings to other learners. Learners have raised equal opportunities issues with staff and these have been dealt with quickly and in a supportive manner.

29. **Internal verification procedures are good.** Staff are appropriately qualified and experienced. Assessors, assessments and portfolios are regularly checked against the standards. Accreditation of prior learning is used to good effect for learners with previous qualifications.

30. Harlow ITeC uses international standards for quality assurance. The company is committed to maintaining detailed and effective quality assurance procedures. The quality assurance procedures manual is regularly updated and staff informed accordingly. All new staff receive an induction into the quality assurance procedures manual. However, managers have not dealt with problems that they are aware of, such as falling retention rates and the shortcomings in literacy and numeracy support.

31. **There is insufficient co-ordination of the literacy and numeracy aspects of learners' training programmes.** There is no appropriate initial assessment of learners' literacy and numeracy levels. Staff and learners do not understand clearly how literacy and numeracy support is linked to key skills training. Arrangements for supporting learners' literacy and numeracy needs are very limited.

32. **The business plan identifies key objectives but does not state how they are to be achieved, by whom or when.** A recent action plan contains targets, but it is too soon to evaluate any outcome from these. There are no demanding targets recorded in the minutes of staff and assessors' meetings. Some data on learners' completion rates are incorrectly recorded.

33. Monthly staff meetings and regular assessors' meetings are formally minuted. However, there is no formal recording of the weekly meetings between managers and other key staff to standardise the information passed on to all staff.

34. The proportion of learners from minority ethnic groups does not reflect that of the local population. Staff training on equal opportunities is inadequate. Staff with knowledge and experience of equal opportunities are not systematically used to raise the awareness of their colleagues. Employers involved in training learners are not fully monitored for equality of opportunity. **Managers are not sufficiently active in planning the company's approach to equal opportunities.**

35. **Harlow ITeC does not use the equality of opportunity data it collects to best effect.** Staff and managers fail to act on some information supplied by learners. Five new learners indicated that they had disabilities, but this was not picked up by the provider and no guidance or support was offered to them.

36. **Harlow ITeC's self-assessment report was insufficiently critical.** In particular, weaknesses in leadership and management, equality of opportunity, quality assurance and foundation programmes were not identified. Staff were involved in the self-assessment process. Feedback from learners and employers is not evaluated sufficiently to contribute to the self-assessment process or bring about improvements.

*The following strengths and weaknesses were identified during this inspection:*

## **Leadership and management**

### **Strengths**

- good links with external organisations
- good staff development and training
- good IT resource management
- good understanding of equality of opportunity by learners
- good internal verification process

### **Weaknesses**

- poor management of literacy and numeracy provision
- ineffective use of targets to bring about continuous improvements
- some disjointed lines of communication
- poor promotion of equality of opportunity

#### HARLOW INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY CENTRE (1992) LTD

- poor use of equality of opportunity data to advise staff of learners' needs
- insufficiently critical self-assessment process

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

#### **Strengths**

- good office skills developed by learners
- good resources
- good assessment and internal verification practice

#### **Weaknesses**

- poor and falling retention and achievement rates on NVQ programmes and foundation modern apprenticeships
- insufficient understanding of key skills requirements on advanced modern apprenticeships

### **Information & communications technology**

#### **Strengths**

- good rate of achievement of modern apprenticeship frameworks
- good assessment and internal verification
- good pastoral support
- very good work placements

#### **Weaknesses**

- no formal identification of, or support for, learners' additional literacy and numeracy needs

## **Foundation programmes**

### **Strengths**

- good progression on to level 2 programmes
- good teaching
- wide range of additional activities to enhance the learning experience
- good IT resources
- effective working relationships with employers

### **Weaknesses**

- poor retention rate on Life Skills programmes
- inadequate initial assessment
- inadequate individual development plans
- insufficient support for learners' literacy and numeracy needs
- unsatisfactory transition to E2E
- unsystematic pastoral support

## **WHAT LEARNERS LIKE ABOUT HARLOW INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY CENTRE (1992) LTD:**

- learning there as it improves their chances of getting a job
- the teachers/assessors
- the helpful tutors
- the independent reviews
- the staff having high expectations of them, in dress and behaviour
- team-building and finding a job
- the chance to evaluate jobs while gaining qualifications
- the work placements - 'my work placement is brilliant'
- the good grounding it provides for work

## **WHAT LEARNERS THINK HARLOW INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY CENTRE (1992) LTD COULD IMPROVE:**

- the frequency of assessors' visits - learners would like it increased
- the amount of individual coaching - learners would like more
- the effect of the change to E2E - it has reduced the amount of time available to work towards IT qualifications
- the preparatory training - it needs to be more interesting
- the range of training courses
- the structure of some IT programmes - learners would like to progress at their own pace

## **KEY CHALLENGES FOR HARLOW INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY CENTRE (1992) LTD:**

- implement a strategic plan for literacy and numeracy provision
- develop a more effective self-assessment system
- ensure the quality assurance system effectively covers all aspects of the provision
- improve target-setting
- improve lines of communication
- increase retention and achievement rates on NVQ programmes and foundation modern apprenticeships in business administration
- improve individual learning plans
- develop initial assessments
- improve the co-ordination of E2E programmes
- implement a comprehensive equality of opportunity process
- develop a systematic pastoral system for E2E learners

## DETAILED INSPECTION FINDINGS

### LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

**Grade 4**

*The following strengths and weaknesses were identified during this inspection:*

#### **Strengths**

- good links with external organisations
- good staff development and training
- good IT resource management
- good understanding of equality of opportunity by learners
- good internal verification process

#### **Weaknesses**

- poor management of literacy and numeracy provision
- ineffective use of targets to bring about continuous improvements
- some disjointed lines of communication
- poor promotion of equality of opportunity
- poor use of equality of opportunity data to advise staff of learners' needs
- insufficiently critical self-assessment process

37. Managers have actively pursued the development of partnerships. There are strong links with the local further education college. The company has worked with the college and with another Life Skills training provider to set up a three-tier programme for learners. This was designed to give each learner access to the most appropriate course and centre, and to allow them to move between providers when necessary. Links with the college give learners access to additional qualifications. The staff have good knowledge of the local employment market which enables them to identify opportunities for work placements. Some employers have long-term connections with Harlow ITeC and have provided employment opportunities for a number of learners over several years. The company collaborates with two other ITeCs in Essex, exchanging information about programmes and performance as well as sharing good practice. The board of trustees has been restructured to include representatives from a variety of local educational and commercial organisations.

38. Staff appraisal and development is good. Appraisals take place annually. Staff development plans are negotiated after appraisals. The plans clearly record details of training and qualifications, including duration and timescales. All staff complete training forms. The forms record the training proposals, and include details of the expected aims and objectives and how well these were met by the course. After four months, staff identify how the knowledge and skills from the training have been implemented and how they have improved their work. Staff have, or are encouraged to work towards a wide range of appropriate skills and qualifications, including teaching qualifications and short

courses in health and safety. However, there has been no staff training in equality of opportunity.

39. IT resources at Harlow ITeC are managed well. All learners based at the training centre have access to a range of networked computers and related IT equipment. Older computers are recycled and put to good use; for example, learners on E2E programmes use them to develop and practise their technical skills. IT staff are aware of the range of adapted technologies the company has available to assist learners with learning difficulties or disabilities. These include speech readers, large keyboards and large monitors.

40. Harlow ITeC has an adequate central management information system for collecting and recording data on learners. This has recently been networked to give staff access to the information. Some staff have received training in the use of the system, but many do not yet use it. One member of staff is responsible for updating learners' details, and one for retrieving information. Data are not fully used to plan the provision.

41. The provision of support for learners with additional learning needs in literacy and numeracy is poorly managed. There is no appropriate system for the initial assessment of learners' literacy and numeracy levels. A screening test is used which does not adequately identify learners' specific needs. Staff and learners do not have a clear understanding of how literacy and numeracy support links with key skills training. Nor do they know each learner's starting point. Some staff have taken short introductory courses on the latest literacy and numeracy standards. Some staff have qualifications in teaching literacy and numeracy, but these are only just being updated to the latest standards. Literacy and numeracy support sessions were provided for learners but these were not adequately planned. A new system has now been introduced that will allow learners with additional learning needs to be offered individual sessions.

42. There is ineffective use of targets to improve the provision and those set are recorded inadequately. Harlow ITeC's business plan contains key objectives that are not explicit enough. It does not state how the objectives are to be achieved, by whom or when. The company has recently devised an action plan that does contain targets, but it is too soon to evaluate any outcome from this. No demanding targets are recorded in the minutes of management, team, staff or assessors' meetings. Some data on learners' completion rates are recorded incorrectly.

43. There are monthly staff meetings and regular assessors' meetings which are formally minuted. The sharing of information between staff, management and board is, however, disjointed. Although managers and other key staff have weekly resource meetings, there is no formal record of agenda items or of any discussions, targets or actions that are agreed during these meetings. Staff attending the meetings record their own notes and pass on information to the staff they line manage.

### **Equality of opportunity**

### **Contributory grade 3**

44. Harlow ITeC has a comprehensive equal opportunities policy which includes guidance and procedures. The company has a clear commitment to equal opportunities. An equal opportunities committee meets to review the policy and its implementation. It has revised the policy to take account of legislative changes, and introduced an improved equal opportunities induction session for learners and staff.

45. Learners have a good understanding of equal opportunities. There is a good interactive induction pack on equal opportunities, and staff check learners' understanding of their rights and responsibilities at progress reviews, in training sessions, and during informal contacts. Some learners carry out additional equal opportunities research and present their findings to learners' groups. Some learners have had difficulties with equal opportunities issues in work placements or at the training centre. They have been well supported and appropriately advised by Harlow ITeC's staff, and the problems have been resolved. Formal complaints are dealt with in a satisfactory manner. The work-based learners' progress review document includes a section on equal opportunities for learners to complete. However, this is too basic to be meaningful in confirming learners' understanding. Before learners are placed with them, employers are checked for compliance with health and safety and equal opportunities legislation. However, once an employer has been approved, there is little monitoring to ensure that they continue to comply.

46. Harlow ITeC does not market work-based learning programmes directly to young people from minority ethnic groups, but staff are working with adults from minority ethnic groups and hope to attract young learners through them. Harlow ITeC has a range of facilities to help learners who have difficulties with sight and hearing. There are no materials to support learners for whom English is an additional language.

47. The promotion of equal opportunities is poor. Staff do not have sufficient training in equal opportunities. Some staff have had training in dealing with dyslexia and drugs misuse during the past 18 months. Some staff have direct experience and qualifications in equal opportunities, but there is no formal system to allow them to share this knowledge with their colleagues. Some staff directly involved with learners could not recall any training in equal opportunities taking place.

48. Harlow ITeC collects data for equal opportunities purposes and has recently introduced an improved system to capture even more related data. However, such information is generally not passed on to staff or managers. Five learners recruited indicated that they had disabilities, but the provider did not respond to the information and no guidance or support was offered to them.

### **Quality assurance**

### **Contributory grade 3**

49. Harlow ITeC has a detailed system of quality assurance procedures, which is regularly updated to inform staff of current standard practices. The procedures are clearly defined and highly detailed. All new staff receive an induction into the quality assurance procedures manual, and the company is committed to maintaining the

procedures at a good level. However, the quality assurance system is not applied consistently. The three areas of learning inspected have all been awarded different grades and managers have not dealt with problems that they are aware of, such as falling retention rates and the need to improve literacy and numeracy support.

50. The internal verification procedures are good. Internal verifiers are appropriately qualified and experienced. A curriculum manager oversees and monitors internal verification processes to ensure their effectiveness. Internal verifiers regularly observe assessments and check portfolios of evidence to make sure assessments are fair and accurate. Internal verification consistently meets awarding body requirements. Observations of assessors are well established. There is clear indexing and referencing and good accreditation of prior learning, especially when learners have previous NVQ completions. There is good use of interim internal verification checklists. Internal verifiers and assessors meet regularly to share good practice and to discuss and resolve assessment and verification issues.

51. The curriculum manager is responsible for formally monitoring and observing teaching, training and learners' progress reviews. Observations are systematically recorded, and staff receive feedback on their performance and development needs. However, this system has failed to pick up the ineffective literacy and numeracy support arrangements.

52. Harlow ITeC's self-assessment process is insufficiently critical particularly in relation to leadership and management, quality assurance, equality of opportunity and the foundation area of learning. It failed to identify a number of weaknesses which affect learners. Feedback from staff is collected using questionnaires, staff meetings and an annual away day for all staff. The results are analysed and used in the self-assessment process. Feedback is collected from learners during the progress reviews at various stages of their training, and on exit from their programmes. Employers' feedback is sought using questionnaires and during learners' progress reviews. There is some analysis of learners' and employers' feedback, but it is not evaluated and used sufficiently in the self-assessment process or to bring about improvements.

## AREAS OF LEARNING

### Business administration, management & professional

Grade 3

Programmes inspected	Number of learners	Contributory grade
Work-based learning for young people	27	3

*The following strengths and weaknesses were identified during this inspection:*

#### Strengths

- good office skills developed by learners
- good resources
- good assessment and internal verification practice

#### Weaknesses

- poor and falling retention and achievement rates on NVQ programmes and foundation modern apprenticeships
- insufficient understanding of key skills requirements on advanced modern apprenticeships

### Achievement and standards

53. Learners acquire good office skills. They attend off-the-job training sessions on telephone skills, customer care, and minute-taking. Many modern apprentices, including those who leave their programmes early, achieve additional qualifications in basic computer maintenance or IT. More than half the early leavers in 2000-01 and 2001-02 gained jobs, as did many of the retained learners.

54. The retention rate for foundation modern apprentices fell from 59 per cent in 2000-01 to 33 per cent in 2001-02. A further 2 per cent of 2001-02 learners are still in learning. All those who were retained achieved their modern apprenticeship framework. Sixty-four per cent of the foundation modern apprentices who started programmes in 2002-03 are still in learning. Harlow ITeC has recently introduced a system for collecting feedback from early leavers. It hopes to use this to identify trends and improve the retention rate.

55. Retention and achievement rates for advanced modern apprentices are satisfactory. Seventy-eight per cent of learners who started programmes in 2000-01 were retained, and all of these achieved their full modern apprenticeship framework. Sixty-seven per cent of those recruited in 2001-02 have been retained, of whom 50 per cent have achieved their full modern apprenticeship framework and a further 33 per cent are still in learning. All the advanced modern apprentices who started programmes in 2002-03 are still in learning.

56. There are only three learners on NVQ programmes. In 2000-01 and 2001-02, all the learners who were retained achieved their NVQ. However, the achievement and retention rates were poor and falling. Sixty per cent of the learners recruited in 2002-03 have either been retained or are still in learning. One learner who started in 2002-03 has just achieved an NVQ at level 4 in accounts.

The following tables show the achievement and retention rates available up to the time of the inspection.

LSC funded work-based learning																
Advanced modern apprenticeships (AMA)																
	2003-04		2002-03		2001-02		2000-01									
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Number of starts			5		6		9									
Retained*			0		4	67	7	78								
Successfully completed			0		3	50	7	78								
Still in learning			5		2	33	0	0								

\*retained learners are those who have stayed in learning for at least the planned duration of their training programmes, or have successfully completed their programme within the time allowed

LSC funded work-based learning																
Foundation modern apprenticeships (FMA)																
	2003-04		2002-03		2001-02		2000-01									
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Number of starts			25		46		39									
Retained*			0		15	33	23	59								
Successfully completed			0		15	33	23	59								
Still in learning			16		1	2	0	0								

\*retained learners are those who have stayed in learning for at least the planned duration of their training programmes, or have successfully completed their programme within the time allowed

LSC funded work-based learning																
NVQ Training																
	2003-04		2002-03		2001-02		2000-01									
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Number of starts	1		5		12		17									
Retained*	0		1	20	4	33	8	47								
Successfully completed	0		1	20	4	33	8	47								
Still in learning	1		2	40	0	0	0	0								

\*retained learners are those who have stayed in learning for at least the planned duration of their training programmes, or have successfully completed their programme within the time allowed

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

57. Most learners' vocational support needs are appropriately identified, and learners are working at the correct level of qualification. Some foundation modern apprentices receive numeracy and literacy support from their vocational tutors. Learners benefit from the good work placements and the individual coaching provided by Harlow ITeC's staff. All those involved in the training programme work well together and the learners' progress is reviewed regularly. The trainers are highly skilled and committed, and respond quickly to any problems by offering the learners good support. Most learners express satisfaction with their programmes and the quality of training they receive.

58. There are good resources for training. The training rooms are spacious and well equipped with sufficient networked workstations. There are well-developed learning materials that are clearly related to the industry. A comprehensive set of unit-based materials has recently been introduced to cover the background knowledge for the new technical certificates. The materials are used flexibly in group training and discussion sessions, and they can also be used by learners for independent study. The staff are well qualified and experienced. They frequently attend external training to update their qualifications and occupational competence.

59. Assessments are carried out in the workplace every three weeks. Assessors complete detailed observation records, identifying the elements achieved, performance criteria met and the background knowledge demonstrated. Detailed assessment plans are completed with the learner, setting short-term targets for the next three weeks. Assessors' observations are backed up by work products and witness statements from supervisors and workplace colleagues. There is good accreditation of the learners' prior achievements.

60. All assessors are qualified and occupationally competent. There are comprehensive assessors' and internal verifiers' records. The staff are well briefed on all the NVQ requirements and the chief internal verifier keeps all team members fully informed at assessors' meetings every two months. Detailed minutes of the meetings are circulated promptly. The assessors are regularly observed, and new assessors receive very good support from internal verifiers. Internal verifiers question the learners to ensure their understanding, and make good use of this information when giving feedback to assessors. There is a good sampling plan for internal verification.

61. Teaching is satisfactory. The lessons are effectively planned and there is a good ratio of trainers to learners. Learners' understanding is not always checked, and the range of learning activities is sometimes narrow.

62. Induction is satisfactory and is remembered by most learners. Learners are given enough information to prepare them for their course. All learners have individual learning plans which are used effectively, although some learners are unsure of their purpose. Learners often keep a copy of their learning plan in their NVQ portfolio. The original is filed centrally. Learners' progress reviews are three-way discussions between

the learner, the reviewer and the workplace supervisor. Short-term targets are agreed to ensure progress towards the qualification. Learners and workplace supervisors do not receive copies of the review paperwork.

63. Harlow ITeC's staff do not have sufficient understanding of the key skills requirements of the advanced modern apprenticeship framework. All the employers interviewed were unclear about the units or levels of key skills. Learners' key skills portfolios contain insufficient evidence of their ability to carry out manual calculations. Too little communication evidence is collected from the workplace and too much is project-based and not related to work. Some learners spend more than 50 hours on these projects, which is an inefficient use of time.

### **Leadership and management**

64. The programmes of learning are satisfactorily managed. The curriculum manager holds regular team meetings, some formal and minuted, and others informal and unrecorded. The staff benefit from an annual appraisal and twice-yearly identification of their training requirements. They are well qualified. There is sharing of good practice in assessment and verification through regular informal discussions. The internal verification system is well planned and very effective. There are no effective ways of measuring the quality of learners' progress reviews or checking systematically that all the reviews are carried out. Learners have a good awareness of equal opportunities issues and of the policies and the procedures. There is good staff involvement in the self-assessment process. Some of the strengths and weaknesses of this area of learning were accurately identified. There are good records of learners' work placements, and the progress they are making towards NVQs and key skills. Staff do not analyse achievement and retention rates in sufficient detail, or identify and deal with the weak aspects of the programme promptly enough.

## Information & communications technology

Grade 2

Programmes inspected	Number of learners	Contributory grade
Work-based learning for young people	10	2

*The following strengths and weaknesses were identified during this inspection:*

### Strengths

- good rate of achievement of modern apprenticeship frameworks
- good assessment and internal verification
- good pastoral support
- very good work placements

### Weaknesses

- no formal identification of, or support for, learners' additional literacy and numeracy needs

### Achievement and standards

65. The achievement rates for learners on IT modern apprenticeship programmes are good. In 2001-02, 70 per cent of foundation modern apprentices achieved the modern apprenticeship framework. Ten per cent of the intake are still in learning. In 2000-01, 75 per cent achieved the modern apprenticeship framework. Sixty-six per cent of the learners who achieved the framework progressed into employment. Achievement rates for advanced modern apprentices were 100 per cent in 2001-02 and 83 per cent in 2000-01. All the learners who achieved the full framework gained employment. Achievement rates for learners on NVQ programmes are satisfactory. Some learners gain IT qualifications in addition to those required by the framework. Learners acquire very good skills and many work above the level of the qualification standards.

The following tables show the achievement and retention rates available up to the time of the inspection.

LSC funded work-based learning																
Advanced modern apprenticeships (AMA)																
	2003-04		2002-03		2001-02		2000-01									
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Number of starts					2		6									
Retained*					2	100	5	83								
Successfully completed					2	100	5	83								
Still in learning					0	0	0	0								

\*retained learners are those who have stayed in learning for at least the planned duration of their training programmes, or have successfully completed their programme within the time allowed

LSC funded work-based learning																
Foundation modern apprenticeships (FMA)																
	2003-04		2002-03		2001-02		2000-01									
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Number of starts	2		6		10		8									
Retained*	0		0		7		6	75								
Successfully completed	0		0		7		6	75								
Still in learning	2		5		1		0	0								

\*retained learners are those who have stayed in learning for at least the planned duration of their training programmes, or have successfully completed their programme within the time allowed

LSC funded work-based learning																
NVQ Training																
	2003-04		2002-03		2001-02		2000-01									
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Number of starts			2		2		2									
Retained*			0		1	50	1	50								
Successfully completed			0		1	50	1	50								
Still in learning			2		0	0	0	0								

\*retained learners are those who have stayed in learning for at least the planned duration of their training programmes, or have successfully completed their programme within the time allowed

## Quality of education and training

66. Assessment procedures on IT programmes are good. Learners get regular assessment during their initial training and in the workplace. There is good feedback from assessors. Individual learning plans are used to set clear assessment targets, based on the learners' requirements, and agreed with the assessor and the workplace supervisors. Realistic assessment tasks are set to reflect individual progress towards achieving the framework or programme requirements. There are appropriate resources

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and support available to help learners meet the targets set. A variety of assessment methods is used, including task sheets, review and feedback forms, assessment plans and records, and task checklists.

67. Harlow ITeC provides good pastoral support for IT learners. Learners have good access to staff both at the centre and in the workplace, and are very satisfied with the level of support provided by assessors and tutors. Staff are very responsive to learners' needs. Learners have access to IT resources in the centre, as well as to tutors who are able to assist with framework requirements as needed. Assessors give learners extra work if they have completed an element of their programme early or feel they are ready to take on more tasks. Learners are aware of the procedures for complaints, IT problem logging and appeals. They feel that they are given an effective introduction to the world of work, and are ready when a work placement becomes available. In most cases, if problems with a work placement are identified through learners' feedback, they are dealt with efficiently and speedily. Employers work with training staff to support individual learners.

68. Learners on IT programmes have very good work placements. Learners interviewed all expressed satisfaction with their work placements, most which are secured by Harlow ITeC. The workplace facilities are very appropriate to the needs of the programme. Tasks set in the workplace are realistic and are well matched to the programme and learners' requirements. Workplace supervisors are supportive and understand the requirements of the programme. They make every effort to release learners when circumstances require them to attend the training centre. Employers are very happy with the ability shown by learners entering the workplace.

69. Harlow ITeC's induction process is satisfactory. Induction takes place over two days, during which issues such as health and safety and equality of opportunity are discussed. Learners are happy with the induction process. Learners' feedback is gathered from induction and pre-employment checklists. However, there is little evidence that equality of opportunities is discussed or appropriately reinforced at learners' progress reviews. Most learners felt that they started their work placement at the right time, although some remarked that they would rather have started sooner.

70. There is no evidence of planned provision for learners with additional literacy and numeracy requirements. Initial assessment is used to identify some needs and further diagnostic tests are recommended. However, it is left to individual learners to plan their own additional literacy and numeracy programme. If asked to by the learner, staff will give the necessary support and tuition, even beyond that highlighted in the initial assessment. However, there is no evidence that learners' progress with literacy and numeracy is recorded or monitored.

## Leadership and management

71. Programmes are well managed. Regular feedback is sought from learners, and the results are used to identify problems.

72. IT staff training is effective. It is targeted towards the needs of staff members, with identified needs being met quickly. Staff skill levels are good, and assessors are well qualified. Regular meetings take place between the tutors and assessors to identify and deal with issues relating to assessment and the quality of learning provision.

73. There is a good internal verification process that is detailed and comprehensive. There are good communications between the internal verifier and assessors. Assessors hold frequent meetings to monitor learners' progress. Assessors have progress reviews which are used to identify issues about assessment and training roles. Good use is made of detailed interim internal verification checklists and unit progress reports to check learners' progress towards completion of their programme requirements. Regular external verification confirms that programmes are meeting awarding body requirements.

74. There is good staff involvement in the self-assessment process. Some of the strengths were identified accurately. Most staff were realistically self-critical and the department has identified areas for improvement in its action plan.

## Foundation programmes

Grade 4

Programmes inspected	Number of learners	Contributory grade
Life Skills	28	4

*The following strengths and weaknesses were identified during this inspection:*

### Strengths

- good progression on to level 2 programmes
- good teaching
- wide range of additional activities to enhance the learning experience
- good IT resources
- effective working relationships with employers

### Weaknesses

- poor retention rate on Life Skills programmes
- inadequate initial assessment
- inadequate individual development plans
- insufficient support for learners' literacy and numeracy needs
- unsatisfactory transition to E2E
- unsystematic pastoral support

### Achievement and standards

75. Learners make good progress on to level 2 programmes. Nine learners from the preparatory programme and four Life Skills learners have progressed on to a foundation modern apprenticeship in business administration, and seven learners from the preparatory training programme have progressed on to the IT foundation modern apprenticeship. Two learners have progressed on to the business administration NVQ at level 2, and two on to the IT NVQ at level 2. The retention rate on the Life Skills programme is poor. In 2002-03, 22 per cent of learners were retained. This is a marked decline from the previous year when 88 per cent were retained. The preparatory training programme started in 2002 with 68 learners. Of these, 40 have completed their programme and 22 have been transferred to E2E programmes.

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

LSC funded work-based learning																
Life Skills																
	2003-04		2002-03		2001-02		2000-01									
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Number of starts	1		95		49		18									
Retained*	0		46	48	43	88	17	94								
Successfully completed	0		46	48	43	88	17	94								
Still in learning	1		27	28	0	0	0	0								

\*retained learners are those who have stayed in learning for at least the planned duration of their training programmes, or have successfully completed their programme within the time allowed

### Quality of education and training

76. There is good teaching in well-planned learning sessions. There is frequent interaction between learners, and staff encourage peer learning. Staff motivate and engage learners who have a range of ability levels. Learners enjoy their learning sessions and feel that they are making progress. There is mutual respect between learners and staff. Staff use a variety of strategies to develop learners' skills and enhance learning. For example, in one health and safety session, learners' interest was maintained by the use of a mock trial. IT is used appropriately to enhance learning and there are good links between jobsearch elements and computer skills, using the internet to find companies that regularly recruit. Tutors manage disruptive learners well by the use of positive reinforcement, such as commenting favourably on learners' quiet, purposeful activity. In one observation session, when a group of disengaged learners became very noisy, the tutor very successfully introduced a game that required individuals to move positions in the room.

77. There is a wide range of additional activities that adds interest to the programme and focuses on current and potential areas of concern for learners. For example, visiting speakers regularly lead discussions on relevant issues such as drugs awareness, sexual health, smoking and alcohol, and healthy eating. Additional funding is used well to enhance learners' experience by providing outings to places of interest and giving them the opportunity to gain qualifications that will increase their employability. Learners regularly participate in activities designed to increase their self-confidence and team-working skills, such as attending theatre workshops and a music centre. Learners have acted in their own theatre production and created a music CD, including the design of the packaging.

78. There are effective working relationships with employers' staff, who visit the training centre regularly. Some are actively involved in teaching elements of the programme. Staff members have detailed knowledge of local employers, and carefully match learners

to individual work placements or tasters to suit their aspirations and abilities. Some employers have provided many work tasters allowing learners to experience real work activities while still on their training programme. Some learners have been recommended to the provider by an employer. For example, one learner who originally applied to an employer for a job was told that there were no positions available. The employer advised him to enrol with the provider, in order to improve his employability.

79. There are good IT resources and good training rooms to meet the needs of learners. Learners have access to one computer each. Computers are linked to the internet and a good range of appropriate software is available. Learners interviewed commented on how easily they could access the IT equipment.

80. The induction process is satisfactory. Learners receive a comprehensive induction handbook and participate in appropriate induction activities.

81. Initial assessment is inadequate. It does not generate sufficient information about learners to allow appropriate individual programmes of study, including relevant learning support, to be drawn up. Initial assessment does not always identify all the social, personal and learning needs that could affect learners' rates of progression and level of employability. Some learners were screened to identify their literacy and numeracy levels but there was no discussion of other factors, such as housing and travel needs. Some initial assessment forms are completed without the learner being present and are not signed by them. Some learners have signed blank initial assessment forms and there is no indication of when the outstanding information will be added.

82. The learners' individual development plans are inadequate. They do not always include the results of initial assessments. They are not routinely used to plan learners' future programmes. Most of the targets are generic and descriptive, such as 'finish course' or 'improve skills'. Targets do not always include soft skills, such as strategies for improving communication techniques or team-working skills. Targets seldom include specific timescales for completion to ensure that progress is made at an appropriate rate. Learners' progress reviews vary in quality and the level of detailed information recorded. For example, where there has been soft skills achievement, such as improvement in attendance and punctuality, it is inadequately recorded. Records do not always accurately reflect the full extent of learners' progress. Many reviews have no action points. Learners' identified needs are not recorded. Tutors cannot plan the most appropriate programme for individual learners, and learners cannot plan their own learning.

83. There is insufficient support for learners' literacy, numeracy and language needs. There is no formal procedure to identify additional learning needs, and there is too much reliance on self-referral by learners. Some learners enter the programme with previously identified literacy, numeracy and language needs, but these are not met. For example, two learners who were receiving additional learning support at school have not received any since entering the programme. Additional support, when given, is not routinely recorded, and there is no formal evaluation of how such support affects the learners' progress. There is too much reliance on one software package to screen learners'

literacy and numeracy. This is inadequate as a holistic diagnostic tool and does not give an accurate measure of learners' literacy and numeracy. There is a narrow range of resources for literacy and numeracy training, consisting mainly of worksheets and computers. There is little use of word or card games to inspire and motivate learners. Staff do not fully understand the difference between key skills and literacy, numeracy and language, and they underestimate the importance of literacy and numeracy support to key skills achievement. Until very recently, most support was given in group sessions. A new system has now been introduced that will allow learners with additional learning needs to be offered individual sessions. Several members of staff have already attended basic skills core curriculum training, and two more are booked to attend before the end of the year.

84. There is no organised system of pastoral support. Learners are receiving pastoral support but it is not recorded. They do not have a timetabled opportunity to discuss social and personal issues individually in sufficient depth.

### **Leadership and management**

85. The transition to E2E has been unsatisfactory. Although members of staff did attend national E2E information conferences, there has been insufficient formal in-house training in how the changes would affect learners and in how to allay their concerns. Many learners are confused about the change from Life Skills and preparatory training to E2E. They were given a single sheet hand-out introducing the programme, but no clear explanation of the learning framework or how it related to the previous programmes.

86. Harlow ITeC has not been sufficiently critical in its self-assessment of its foundation programmes. Some strengths and weaknesses were identified, but their importance was underestimated. One weakness identified by inspectors was reported as a strength in the self-assessment report.