

# INSPECTION REPORT

## **IPS International Ltd**

**12 February 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 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
- **learndirect** 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

## IPS International Ltd

### Contents

#### Summary

Description of the provider	1
Scope of provision	1
About the inspection	2
Overall judgement	2
Grades	3
Key findings	3
What learners like about IPS International Ltd	8
What learners think IPS International Ltd could improve	8
Key challenges for IPS International Ltd	9

#### Detailed inspection findings

Leadership and management	10
Equality of opportunity	12
Quality assurance	13
Engineering, technology & manufacturing	15
Business administration, management & professional	20
Health, social care & public services	24

## INSPECTION REPORT

### DESCRIPTION OF THE PROVIDER

1. IPS International Ltd (IPS) operates as a privately owned commercial training and consultancy business which provides a range of training opportunities, supported by private and public funding bodies. It became a limited company in 1997 and the present company is the result of a management buy-out by the current team of three directors in February 2000. About 50 per cent of provision is covered by a contract with the Kent and Medway Learning and Skills Council (LSC) to provide work-based learning for young people in engineering, administration and care. It has provided government-funded training since the mid-1980s. IPS's headquarters and main training facilities are situated on an industrial estate, close to Rochester with good public transport available. Care provision is managed from a smaller office in Folkstone. The first-year foundation programme in engineering and other off-the-job training takes place in Rochester. IPS also subcontracts its engineering training to a local college of further education for courses leading to technical certificates. There are 38 staff, 24 of whom are directly involved in LSC-funded training. There are 252 learners and most are employed by companies across the region. Seventy-seven learners are in engineering, 107 in business administration and 68 in care.

### SCOPE OF PROVISION

#### Engineering, technology & manufacturing

2. IPS manages training programmes for 81 learners on work-based learning programmes in engineering. All are working towards advanced modern apprenticeships. The main occupations are mechanical, electrical, electronics, instrumentation and plastic and polymer processes. Modern apprenticeship frameworks are planned for completion in three to four years. Performing engineering operations at level 2 national vocational qualification (NVQ) is carried out in the first year of training at the training centre on a full-time basis. Subcontracted colleges deliver the off-the-job element of the technical certificate. In subsequent years, learners return to their employers to work towards the key skills, NVQ at level 3 and the technical certificate. Many learners progress to higher-level qualifications. Due to the wide geographical spread of employers, further off-the-job training is delivered on a day release basis at one of several colleges in the region. Learners are mainly recruited in September, although provision is made for learners to join at other times of the year. Learners are recruited through local advertising, directly by employers, Connexions or through liaison with local schools and work-experience programmes. Additional courses are provided to meet the needs of the individual and employers. All learners receive a one-week induction at the training centre. Assessment takes place in the training centre for the NVQ at level 2, and in the workplace when learners on the NVQ at level 3 are considered competent in their work area. All assessors are appropriately qualified or working towards the qualification. Progress reviews are carried out every four weeks.

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

3. There are 34 learners in administration, 10 of whom are advanced modern apprentices and 24 are foundation modern apprentices. Learners are recruited from employers or recruited directly by IPS and placed with employers. IPS has developed a network of employers based in the Kent area that includes local authorities and local, national and international companies. There are two trainer/assessors who provide coaching and training in business administration and key skills. Specialist key skills support is delivered by a key skills tutor and through open learning workbooks. The key skills tutor also provides support with literacy and numeracy. Trainer/assessors visit learners in the workplace usually every three to four weeks. Reviews of progress take place every eight weeks.

### **Health, social care & public services**

4. IPS provides work-based learning in care across north, south and east Kent from two centres based in Rochester and Folkestone. There are 116 learners, of whom 49 are foundation modern apprentices and 59 are advanced modern apprentices. There are eight NVQ learners. All are employed in approximately 40 charitable, local authority and private businesses. Learners are employed in the areas of residential care for the elderly, those in domiciliary care, and those with learning disabilities, challenging behaviour and mental health problems. Most training is delivered in the workplace. Training in background knowledge, practical skills, key skills and portfolio-building takes place every three weeks.

## **ABOUT THE INSPECTION**

Number of inspectors	5
Number of inspection days	20
Number of learner interviews	43
Number of staff interviews	39
Number of employer interviews	16
Number of subcontractor interviews	1
Number of locations/sites/learning centres visited	22
Number of visits	22

## **OVERALL JUDGEMENT**

5. The quality of the provision is adequate to meet the reasonable needs of those receiving it. More specifically, training in engineering is good, and in business administration it is satisfactory. Provision in health, social care and public services is unsatisfactory. Leadership and management are satisfactory, as is the approach to equality of opportunity and quality assurance.

## GRADES

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

Leadership and management	3
Contributory grades:	
Equality of opportunity	3
Quality assurance	3

Engineering, technology & manufacturing	2
Contributory grades:	
Work-based learning for young people	2

Business administration, management & professional	3
Contributory grades:	
Work-based learning for young people	3

Health, social care & public services	4
Contributory grades:	
Work-based learning for young people	4

## KEY FINDINGS

### Achievement and standards

**6. Retention and achievement rates for first-year training in engineering are good.** In 2000-01, 34 learners joined the programme and 33 achieved the NVQ at level 2. Of the 97 learners who started in 2000-01 and 2001-02, 82 per cent are still in learning. Retention rates in administration and care are improving rapidly after management action.

**7. Completion rates for the frameworks in administration are unsatisfactory.** Only 22 per cent of the 110 learners who have started since 2001, have achieved all elements of their learning plan. Achievement of the NVQ is just satisfactory, although an improvement of 32 per cent in the rate of progress was achieved in 2003. There is an improvement of 61 per cent in the achievement of key skills in 2003, compared with 2002. Achievement rates have been affected by a number of learners transferring mid-course to IPS from another provider.

**8. Completion rates for the frameworks in care are very poor.** The rate was 3.4 per cent in 2000-01 and 1.4 per cent in 2002-03, for advanced modern apprentices. There were no completions for foundation modern apprentices in 2000 or 2002. There is some achievement of NVQs at both levels. Key skills achievement is improving. There is a marked improvement in retention rates, with 59 per cent of learners being retained in

2002, compared with 30 per cent in 2001. Half-year figures for 2003 already show an 83 per cent improvement on the previous year.

### Quality of education and training

Grades awarded to learning sessions

	Grade 1	Grade 2	Grade 3	Grade 4	Grade 5	Grade 6	Grade 7	Total
Engineering, technology & manufacturing	0	2	0	1	0	0	0	3
Business administration, management & professional	0	0	3	0	0	0	0	3
Health, social care & public services	0	0	1	3	0	0	0	4
<b>Total</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>10</b>

**9. Learners in engineering benefit from very good teaching and learning opportunities.**

In all areas there is a high staff to learner ratio and staff are well qualified and experienced. The training in the workplace is good. Teaching sessions in administration and care are satisfactory. However, there is a limited range of teaching and learning strategies in care training sessions. Trainers use unit booklets, case studies, and questions and answers almost exclusively. Some learners are not sufficiently challenged. The range of materials to support additional learning is narrow and often inaccessible to care learners.

**10. Resources in the training centre and workplace in engineering are very good.** They are satisfactory in administration. Resources for key skills training are good with up-to-date information technology (IT) facilities. Staff offer individual training in frequent visits to employers' premises. Resources for care training are less satisfactory with a limited range of teaching materials.

**11. Systems for monitoring progress are effective.** Reviews are held every four weeks and trainers and employers meet to discuss progress, attainment and targets. Assessment and internal verification practices are satisfactory. Sessions are planned and regular, and learners are well prepared for assessment. Most learners have a good understanding of their progress.

**12.** Learners have a satisfactory initial assessment. They attend an in-depth interview to determine previous experience, qualifications and career aims, and take assessment tests for key skills, literacy, numeracy and language and preferred learning styles in some cases. Learners are not always aware of the results and the individual learning plan does not always reflect the findings in sufficient detail. Nor do they include targets that allow a learner to fully understand their next steps beyond unit completion.

**13.** Literacy, numeracy and language support is satisfactory and mainly takes place in key skills sessions or individually in the workplace. The needs of learners are assessed at induction and most learners are working at the correct level of qualification. There is no strategy for literacy, numeracy and language skills for the organisation or for employers.



14. **Learners receive good support and guidance.** They are guided effectively through a wide range of experiences during training. Induction is thorough. Regular and frequent visits are made by trainer/assessors. If off-the-job sessions are missed, trainers give individual support on employers' premises. Trainers are responsive to concerns expressed by learners and act promptly to support them. Trainers are accessible and easily contactable by mobile telephone. Good support is given to those who have learning difficulties or disabilities, especially learners with dyslexia or dyspraxia.

### Leadership and management

15. **Internal and external communications are good.** Newsletters are produced frequently for learners, one specifically for key skills, and for staff. Learner of the month and learner of the year awards are made and employers are involved in IPS activities. Seminars are attended, many effective meetings are held, and staff attend company conferences four times a year.

16. **IPS has taken good action to rectify identified weaknesses.** The self-assessment process is sufficiently self-critical for IPS to produce innovative strategies for improvement. A new reporting system has been introduced recently in care to monitor the learners' progress and unit completion. An effective new scheme offers a voucher to learners and employers who respond to feedback questionnaires. There is good team working and effective links with employers to improve recruitment.

17. **There is a strong commitment to appraisal and staff development.** All assessors are qualified and many are working towards the verifier award. Staff have professional qualifications and relevant experience in their vocational field. Each employer is offered two free training places for equal opportunities.

18. **The use of management information is inadequate.** Data are collected but there is insufficient use of information for self-assessment or planning. Monitoring systems for learner retention, progress and achievement are in place, but are not sufficiently developed.

19. **The quality assurance of training is adequate.** A number of developments are too recent for new measures to impact on the learners' outcomes. However, there is good co-operation with employers and good team working among staff. Learners and employers are consulted and their views are used for the self-assessment process.

20. Assessment practices are satisfactory. The provider has introduced new quality assurance measures to increase the achievement rates. A new system to monitor actual achievement against planned achievement for all components of the framework is effective. Assessors are observed frequently and appropriate feedback is given. Learners are assessed regularly and have good support with their portfolios.

21. **There is insufficient monitoring of equality of opportunity.** IPS works with employers to develop policies and procedures, but the auditing of employers' files has only been introduced recently and monitoring is not systematic. Learners have a basic

understanding of their rights and responsibilities.

22. The promotion of equal opportunities is satisfactory. However, engineering courses are rarely successful in attracting women. IPS has been more successful in recruiting men to care programmes. IPS carries out a series of marketing activities to attract learners from under-represented groups. Photographs in marketing materials reinforce the culture of equality of opportunity.

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

### **Leadership and management**

#### **Strengths**

- good internal and external communications
- good initiatives for continuous improvement
- effective sharing of good practice
- good support for learners

#### **Weaknesses**

- insufficiently established quality assurance systems
- insufficient use of management information
- inadequate medium- and long-term target-setting

### **Engineering, technology & manufacturing**

#### **Strengths**

- good training
- good resources
- effective assessment and monitoring of progress
- good links with supportive employers
- very good support for learners
- very effective management of learning

#### **Weaknesses**

- poor retention rates for some years
- slow progress towards key skills for some learners

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

### **Strengths**

- good work placements and supportive employers
- good support for learners
- effective short-term planning

### **Weaknesses**

- unsatisfactory completion rates for the framework

## **Health, social care & public services**

### **Strengths**

- extensive support for learners
- good communication
- effective measures to improve retention rates

### **Weaknesses**

- poor achievement rates
- slow progress of some learners in completing units
- limited range of teaching and learning strategies in training sessions
- insufficient access to additional learning materials for some learners

## **WHAT LEARNERS LIKE ABOUT IPS INTERNATIONAL LTD:**

- assessors always delivering the things that they promise
- the strict enforcement of health and safety
- having a lot more confidence
- frequent reviews
- the good teaching and training
- the well-controlled training environment
- the benefits from the personal development programme
- the very good support throughout the programme - 'I have a lot of help with my portfolio from my trainer'
- the detailed action plans
- the accessible and encouraging assessors

## **WHAT LEARNERS THINK IPS INTERNATIONAL LTD COULD IMPROVE:**

- more privacy to discuss personal needs
- better learning support in administration
- better learning support materials
- more apprenticeship money
- better structure to college assignments
- better communication by assessors

## **KEY CHALLENGES FOR IPS INTERNATIONAL LTD:**

- raise completion rates for the modern apprenticeship framework
- continue to develop key skills training
- improve the quality assurance of training in administration and care
- make better use of data across the whole company
- select a champion for equal opportunities and raise enthusiasm further
- increase and improve target-setting in training and leadership and management
- focus on extending the range of teaching and learning opportunities in care

## DETAILED INSPECTION FINDINGS

### LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

Grade 3

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

#### Strengths

- good internal and external communications
- good initiatives for continuous improvement
- effective sharing of good practice
- good support for learners

#### Weaknesses

- insufficiently established quality assurance systems
- insufficient use of management information
- inadequate medium- and long-term target-setting

23. Internal and external communication is good. There are regular, well-recorded monthly meetings for all staff. All-staff conferences also take place four times a year and are an effective forum for discussion. Regular curriculum group meetings and board meetings take place and outcomes are promptly communicated formally and informally to all staff. There is a flat management structure and staff at all levels work effectively as a team. Communication with employers is regular and very effective. They receive regular newsletters and frequent visits. Employers have a good understanding of the apprenticeship framework and the training learners receive. Learner of the month and learner of the year awards celebrate achievements. Photographs of successful learners are displayed prominently. Modern apprenticeship newsletters are produced every month. They are clear and well illustrated and are circulated to all employers. One of the directors of IPS is on the board of the Ufi for Kent and has received effective support in developing the learndirect facility. IPS has recently been awarded a large contract as part of a local initiative and is actively involved in bids for European social funding.

24. There is a satisfactory system for staff appraisals every year. Personal development and training needs are appropriately identified and are linked to company objectives. Staff have attended a wide range of training and events including teaching and assessing awards. Quarterly reviews have recently been introduced to allow interim progress to be discussed more regularly.

25. Resources are satisfactory. Facilities, equipment and materials for engineering learners are very good, but they are unsatisfactory for some care learners. Physical resources at the training centre are satisfactory or better. There are 10 places in each of two well equipped information and communications technology suite, one with internet links. Learners over 19 years of age have access to a well-equipped learndirect facility in the main training centre and a wide range of support materials is available. The provider

has recently received a contract to provide this learning opportunity for 16-18 year olds. This facility is open in the evenings and the week-ends. Many of the workplaces are good working environments. Staff are appropriately qualified to carry out their roles. All assessors are either working towards appropriate awards or have already achieved them.

26. The support for learners is good. The learners' needs are assessed and the results are recorded on the individual learning plans. Staff have reasonable caseloads and visit learners frequently for training, assessment and to give additional learning support. Learners appreciate extra key skills sessions in the main centre. One learner missed a booked session and the trainer visited the learner at work the next day to give individual training. Trainers have mobile telephones and are contactable at all times. There is particularly good support for learners in care work, where they often have low levels of confidence in written work. When there are travel difficulties, staff ensure that learners have transport provided. Learners report how their confidence has increased since taking their course. Some employers are very supportive. Employers of business administration learners allow time in work to complete their portfolios.

27. Support with literacy, numeracy is satisfactory. All learners use the key skills builder as part of an initial assessment for literacy and numeracy and specific learning needs are identified. The needs of some learners are identified as the training progresses. Effective individual support is given by trainers and additional visits are made to the workplace if appropriate. Key skills support sessions are offered at the main training centre and individuals help with literacy and numeracy. Trainers refer their learners, or learners request extra help themselves. Progress is formally recorded and a copy is given to the learner and the trainer.

28. There are good examples of learners remaining on their course because of increased help with key skills and literacy and numeracy. However, IPS does not have a clear strategy to deal with learners who have literacy and numeracy needs and no strategy to develop these skills in the workplace. There is only one member of staff specifically trained to support learners with additional needs. Some of the staff were not able to speak with confidence about the different levels of literacy and numeracy needs. Some employers are insufficiently briefed about the learners' ability to progress with their qualification. Learners over 19 years of age have access to learndirect support materials in the main training centre and this facility has recently been extended to include 16-18 year olds.

29. There is insufficient use of management information. Although there is an efficient management information system, it is not used to its full capacity. There is no systematic collection or use of data relating to retention and achievement rates. There has been no analysis of trends and there is no current performance data. Data are not used to effectively analyse trends in recruitment of under-represented groups for equal opportunities.

30. The medium- and long-term target-setting is inadequate. There is a one-year business plan which relates to the self-assessment report, and a one-year development

plan. IPS also completes a three-year development plan for the LSC, but there are no targets with timescales. The one-year development plan relating to the self-assessment report has some targets but they are vague and are not clearly measurable. Many initiatives are new and have involved detailed planning at an operational level. Although most staff have a good understanding of short-term objectives, there is insufficient focus on the long-term strategy and direction for the next three years.

### **Equality of opportunity**

### **Contributory grade 3**

31. Equal opportunities is given high priority at IPS, but no one acts as a champion to further raise its profile. IPS is represented at director level at events and presentations including an area minority ethnic forum. There is a culture of support and staff and learners feel valued and respected. For example, a business administration learner on induction as a new office junior was introduced to all directors who explained their roles to her. There are policies that are updated regularly and procedures for their implementation. All learners receive equal opportunities information at induction. However, there is little recall of its content when learners are questioned. The effect of recruitment policies is limited, as most of the learners are already in employment. Learners understand their rights and responsibilities and know how to complain if harassment or bullying takes place. They know who to appeal to if they have concerns about assessment. Any issues that arise are dealt with promptly and most are resolved satisfactorily. Equal opportunities is not systematically reinforced by employers or in training.

32. Employers are providing good work environments for learners. IPS attracts learners who have barriers to training and employment, and good individual support is offered. Learners who have specific difficulties are well catered for. A learner who has dyspraxia had weekly visits from her trainer and achieved her key skills and NVQ. Learners who have dyslexia are given all their work on coloured paper. Equal opportunities is raised at progress reviews and few problems are reported. If there are concerns that cannot be resolved, trainers assure learners that they will approach a new employer and ensure that they can continue with their apprenticeship. Two free places for equal opportunities training online are offered to each employer and equal opportunities seminars are held. However, the awareness of learners and employers of the wider issues of equal opportunities and diversity remains a challenge for IPS. Learners receive little equal opportunities training beyond that required by the NVQ.

33. Data on individual learners are collected. However, the development plan does not set demanding targets for attracting hard-to-reach learners. For some years, the recruitment rate of learners from minority ethnic groups has been approximately 4 per cent, although LSC targets for the region exceed this. Sixty per cent of learners are women, but they are under-represented on engineering courses. In care provision, 10 per cent of learners are men. There are no specific targets set for recruiting learners with disabilities. Most employers are not sufficiently involved in the analysis of the rates of retention, achievement or progression to bring about improvements. Auditing of employer files is a new development.



34. Access is good at the main training centre in Rochester. There are toilet facilities for disabled people. The workshop and training rooms on the ground floor are suitable for those with restricted mobility. There is no lift to the upper floor at Folkestone, where care provision is managed, but effort is made to relocate activity if necessary. In some cases there is no private space for confidential conversations with learners. Most of the employers' premises will be assessed in a forthcoming audit.

### **Quality assurance**

### **Contributory grade 3**

35. IPS has been engaged in a wide range of initiatives to improve the quality of the learners' experience, many of which have taken place over the past 10 months. Progress reviews have been extensively revised after detailed discussions between programme teams. There is now a greater focus on target-setting and on monitoring the learners' progress. Staff in engineering attend key recruitment events which are organised by large companies, to influence recruitment strategies and potential retention rates of their own learners. This pilot is being replicated in care and administration. Detailed monitoring records have been developed to monitor progress against targets. This is reviewed monthly by the director and discussed with team leaders and trainers. Learners who are at risk of leaving early are discussed at monthly quality assurance meetings of the LSC contract group, and programme teams follow up the actions. More frequent visits to the workplace and additional individual sessions are offered to these learners.

36. IPS is actively involved in a countywide initiative to share and promote good practice. One of the company directors is vice-chair of this group. The company also carries out good practice visits throughout the country and from these visits, a new initial assessment procedure has been piloted, which includes a questionnaire on learning styles. IPS has an effective forum for sharing and comparing good practice and improving consistency across all curriculum areas. The LSC contract group is attended by all senior managers and curriculum leaders, and effective discussions take place on key documents and learning styles. Information from this group is effectively shared. Staff from different areas of learning now observe training sessions in other areas, and the transfer of good practice across curriculum areas is now improving consistency. The quality of teaching and learning is improving. Internal observation grades over a period of three months are compared.

37. The quality assurance manual is comprehensive and covers all the key training processes. Regular updating has taken place over the past 10 months. Some of the key training documents have been revised, including progress reviews and initial assessment. Comprehensive audits are now carried out on all learners' personal files and useful feedback is provided to each trainer. All changes to key documents are approved by the LSC contract group and are consistent in each area of learning. Quality assurance is now a regular agenda item on LSC contract group meetings.

38. IPS consults well with employers and learners. Learner and employer feedback is collected on an annual basis. Questions are clear and detailed and responses are collated for each area of learning. Trainer and assessor feedback is also collected at least once a year in the workplace. Employers are sent detailed questionnaires and many give

## IPS INTERNATIONAL LTD

detailed feedback. IPS encourages employers and learners to respond by offering prize incentives. Learners also complete questionnaires about their trainers and comments are recorded in individual staff files. Responses to issues are always prompt. However, analysis of feedback is limited and although areas for improvement are identified, they are not formally recorded as action points.

39. Internal verification is satisfactory. Assessment practices are sound and are carried out by well-qualified staff. A wide range of methods of collecting diverse evidence takes place, including the example in engineering that has been recognised as a good practice. Assessors are observed regularly in the workplace and appropriate feedback is given. Regular sampling takes place and IPS assessors meet regularly for standardisation meetings. External verifier reports are generally positive and suggested improvements are acted upon.

40. Some of the quality assurance systems to monitor and improve retention and achievement rates are new. There are now several systems in place to assure the quality of teaching and support and there is evidence of their effectiveness, particularly in retention rates and unit achievement. Some of these are new and it is too early to assess the full impact across the whole provision. A new monitoring system, which was introduced seven months ago effectively identifies slow progress and enables learners to be monitored. Learners who are at risk of leaving early are identified and each individual is discussed at monthly LSC contract group meetings. Some aspects of initial assessment are new, such as taking account of preferred learning styles. Measures have been put in place to give more frequent and regular individual support to learners with literacy, language and key skills needs. It is too early for IPS to demonstrate the impact on results over time, but attendance at key skills sessions is already much improved. Additional support in the workplace has increased the progress in unit achievement. Some developments, such as the auditing of employer files, have only just begun and are still incomplete. Much information is collected and discussed at an operational level and improvements are put in place. However, it is not part of a long-term strategic plan which enables the provider to monitor improvement over time.

## AREAS OF LEARNING

### Engineering, technology & manufacturing

Grade 2

Programmes inspected	Number of learners	Contributory grade
Work-based learning for young people	81	2

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

#### Strengths

- good training
- good resources
- effective assessment and monitoring of progress
- good links with supportive employers
- very good support for learners
- very effective management of learning

#### Weaknesses

- poor retention rates for some years
- slow progress towards key skills for some learners

#### Achievement and standards

41. There is good acquisition of a wide range of skills by learners. The standard of work is good during the first year of training at the training centre, as is the quality of work in the workplace. Most learners achieve additional units at NVQ at level 2 and gain additional qualifications during their apprenticeship. Many learners achieve higher national certificates, and some progress to engineering degrees. Learners are encouraged to progress into responsible roles in their companies.

42. The retention and achievement rates are poor on some advanced modern apprenticeship programmes. Retention and achievement rates of those who completed the programme in 1999-2000 are 50 per cent. Retention rates were poor in 2000-01 and 2001-02, at 43 per cent and 28 per cent respectively. Between 2000 and 2002 some learners were transferred to another provider giving an inaccurate picture of retention rates. The retention rates for the past two years are improving. In 2002-03 and 2003-04, 88 per cent and 96 per cent respectively, have remained on apprenticeships.

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		1999-2000								
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	
	Number of starts	26		25		46		51		24							
Retained*	0		0		1		0		12	50							
Successfully completed	0		0		1		0		12	50							
Still in learning	29		22		12		18		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												
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	
	Number of starts					1											
Retained*					1	100											
Successfully completed					1	100											
Still in learning					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

43. There are good arrangements for the delivery of training. Practical and classroom training in the main centre is very good. A wide range of techniques and teaching materials is used. Additional skills are particularly good in the development of team working, leadership and communications. In the training centre, learners are set high targets against which practical performance and background knowledge are measured. Progress is monitored closely and there are well-maintained wall charts to indicate achievements with the NVQ at level 2. Lesson plans and schemes of work are well structured and contain all essential information. Some tutors pay particular attention to learning styles and recognise where differentiation is most applicable.

44. Off-the-job training has been enhanced by a personal development programme. All learners attend these planned training events during their first year at the centre. A further component is an outdoor activity week, where learners are encouraged to use their initiative. Learners respond well to team activities and report increased confidence and motivation. Employers actively support this training and see it as a good introduction to working with other engineers in the workplace. Learners are allocated a skilled craftsman in the workplace to monitor their progress and introduce them to new

skills based on a range of equipment and processes. The planning of training is thorough in some companies.

45. Key skills have been recently introduced at an early stage for first-year learners. Many learners in years three and four have made slow progress towards key skills and have not accumulated evidence from the early stages of their training. Use of IT is limited for some of these learners. Evidence relies on college project work towards the end of the programme. There are examples of learners who need additional time to complete their programmes. Some college lessons are unimaginative and do not involve the learners. The quality of learning is not effectively checked at appropriate stages. Training resources are not used to the best effect in these classes.

46. There are good resources in the training centre and the workplace. Training and assessment staff are well qualified and experienced and offer clear direction for learners. There is a good staff to learner ratio. Learners are normally taught in groups of eight, in which good interaction takes place and individual needs are met. Resources for off-the-job training are very good. Classrooms are spacious and well lit, with a range of training aids. The accommodation offers opportunities for formal lessons, group work and quiet areas for individual tuition.

47. In the workplace, learners continue to train on good machinery or maintenance equipment. Resources at the company's practical training centre are appropriate for first-year training. There are sufficient machines and equipment to complete the off-the-job elements of the programme. Learners have access to a computer suite, and are introduced to computer-aided design. However, there are no links from the design suite to practical computer-controlled machinery.

48. Systems for monitoring progress are effective. Progress reviews are carried out every four weeks and record previous attainment and targets. The learner, training manager or supervisor and assessor make contributions. Review targets are supported by action plans by the in-company assessors at monthly intervals. These monitoring systems are effectively planned to ensure that learners receive progress updates every two weeks.

49. Assessment is satisfactory in the workplace and good in the training centre for the NVQ at level 2. Training centre assessment systems are well developed and are understood by learners. Significant efforts have been made to continuously improve the effectiveness and simplicity of assessment processes. There is a good proportion of qualified assessors in the workplaces who take an active role in progressing learners through the practical requirements of the NVQ. The quality of portfolios in most cases is good. Learners accumulate a wide range of evidence from their experience in the workplace. Digital cameras are made available to record technical evidence and images are effectively used to emphasise the key aspects of work. Learners are responsible for their own cross-referencing and portfolio completion. They take pride in producing good evidence.

50. There are good links with supportive employers. Employers are particularly

supportive and encourage learners to attain high standards of practical ability and qualifications. There are good links between the employers, IPS and the colleges. Regular and effective communication takes place to monitor attendance and performance. Almost all employers visit the training centre frequently to discuss training and monitor the progress of learners. Learners are trained to meet the standards set by the industry. They take responsibility for their own learning and demonstrate a good understanding of the overall requirements of their qualification. There are in-depth discussions between the training department and workshop managers to determine business requirements. Learners' strengths are aligned to a suitable departmental career.

51. Support for learners is very good. Learners are effectively guided through a wide range of experiences during apprenticeships. They are responsive to the responsibility allocated to them and are encouraged to self-assess their performance. Training officers are contacted by telephone or e-mail on a regular basis. They are quick to respond to any areas of concern expressed by learners. Recruitment of learners is good and is supported by an effective introduction to training. Almost all employers have benefited from partnership arrangements with IPS in the recruitment of learners. Thorough initial assessment procedures have been used to recruit learners who are best suited to a career in the industry. In some cases employers prefer to carry out their own recruitment but these employers have not always proved to be successful in identifying suitable modern apprentices. Retention rates for these learners are not as good.

52. Initial assessment for most learners is satisfactory. Learners attend an in-depth interview to determine their previous experience, qualifications and career ambitions. A key skills initial assessment is also completed at this stage. Feedback is not always given to learners on the results of these tests. Induction is comprehensive and is delivered over a week. Equality of opportunity, individual learning styles and health and safety are effectively covered. Individual knowledge is checked by the use of questionnaires. Some employers provide an additional in-depth induction in company training.

53. The initial assessment process identifies learners who have additional support needs in literacy and numeracy. Most learners have a good standard of literacy and numeracy on entry to the programme. Any additional training requirements identified are met through individual support. Trainers are not qualified to train in literacy and numeracy but most have attended specific courses to assist in the recognition of learners with support needs such as dyslexia. A learner at one employer was identified with support needs in numeracy. Arrangements were made for nine sessions of individual training from an independent provider at the employers' premises.

### **Leadership and management**

54. The management of engineering programmes is progressive and effective. Team leaders meet each month to review performance against contracts. Managers are committed to continuous improvement and ideas for improvement are implemented. There are yearly appraisals of staff and some demanding programmes are being taken up by key members of staff. Opportunities to integrate the on- and off-the-job training are effectively implemented. An analysis of learning methods has led to improvements in the

planning of training and schemes of work. Communications are often informal between management and training staff but they are effective and there is frequent and ongoing discussion on the implementation of improvements. There are effective links with colleges, training support organisations, awarding bodies and employers. Employers receive good communication from IPS. They are informed by e-mail of current activities and success stories. Employers are given advice in the development of supportive materials for training and assessment in the workplace. Key skills are not clearly identified in all aspects of training, and opportunities for collecting appropriate evidence are not yet built into the range of delivery.

55. Self-assessment is an integral part of the quality assurance system. All staff are involved in the process. The self-assessment report gives a thorough picture of the organisation and emphasises all aspects of the 'Common Inspection Framework'. Strengths were mainly identified, but some weak practices in key skills were not adequately identified. There is insufficient emphasis on the completion of the modern apprenticeship frameworks. Strengths in terms of level 2 NVQ achievement were over-emphasised. There are satisfactory systems to gain feedback from learners.

56. There are adequate systems to monitor the subcontracted provision at the three colleges. Feedback on performance is achieved through well-structured meetings. Observations of teaching and learning at the colleges and in the training centre take place. Questionnaires are issued at various stages of the programme to evaluate induction, training in the centre and the workplace. Benchmarking exercises have not yet been carried out to compare performance with other providers.

57. Equality of opportunity is well promoted through marketing materials. There are effectively produced images of women in engineering and learners from under-represented groups. Learners demonstrate a good understanding of equality of opportunity. They are well aware of complaints and appeals procedures and have a good awareness of the subject from their induction. Recent efforts to recruit learners from under-represented groups have been unsuccessful. Of the 77 learners, there is one woman in engineering and a small proportion of learners from minority ethnic groups.

**Business administration, management & professional**

**Grade 3**

Programmes inspected	Number of learners	Contributory grade
Work-based learning for young people	34	3

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

**Strengths**

- good work placements and supportive employers
- good support for learners
- effective short-term planning

**Weaknesses**

- unsatisfactory completion rates for the framework

**Achievement and standards**

58. The historical completion rate for modern apprentices is unsatisfactory. Of the learners who have started since 2001 only 22 per cent have completed the framework. A further 25 per cent of learners achieved an NVQ and 35 per cent left the programme without a qualification. The remaining learners are still in learning. The company recognised that achievement was unsatisfactory in 2002 and employed an additional member of staff. In 2003, there was an improvement of 32 per cent for foundation modern apprentices and 57 per cent for advanced modern apprentices over the previous year. There was a 61 per cent improvement in the number of learners achieving key skills in 2003, compared with 2002. In the first five months of the current academic year the number of learners who have left the programme without achieving a qualification has reduced by 50 per cent, compared with the same period in the previous academic year. In 2001 and 2002, IPS accepted a substantial number of learners from other providers at the request of the local LSC. Their previous experiences have impacted adversely on the progress and achievement of many learners.

59. Learners produce good portfolios of evidence that are well structured and contain evidence from a wide range of sources. Many learners use evidence for their NVQ and key skills and make very effective use of evidence-gathering opportunities.



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		1999-2000							
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Number of starts	3		5		16		12		5							
Retained*	0		2		5		8		2	40						
Successfully completed	0		2		1		4		0	0						
Still in learning	3		2		3		1		1	20						

\*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		1999-2000							
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Number of starts	10		19		32		19									
Retained*	0		10		16		0	0								
Successfully completed	0		1		9		4	21								
Still in learning	9		9		5		1	5								

\*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											
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Number of starts					2											
Retained*					2	100										
Successfully completed					1	50										
Still in learning					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

60. IPS has developed very positive working relationships with employers. The company seeks to place learners in placements that match their career preferences. IPS works closely with a number of employers to offer training and employment packages to young people. These typically provide learners with the opportunity to work in a number of departments within the employing organisation while working towards a foundation or advanced modern apprenticeship. Employers have a high regard for the professional

competence and knowledge of assessors and the support that they provide for learners. Employers particularly value the information that is given to them after each assessment visit on the progress and learning needs of learners. Some employers use this information to offer learners support in the workplace. Many employers provide learners with dedicated periods of up to one day a week during which they can gather evidence and develop their portfolios. Employers and IPS also work effectively together to link the on-the-job training to the production of evidence for their NVQ and key skills. The effective co-operation between IPS and employers enables the training provided by IPS to be directly related to the work carried out by learners. Employers and learners identify that the training and assessment carried out by IPS improves the performance of learners in the workplace.

61. Assessment practices are satisfactory. They are well planned and assessors ensure that learners are well prepared for assessment. Most learners have a good understanding of their progress towards the qualification. This has recently been improved by the introduction of a system to monitor actual achievement in relation to planned achievement for all components of the framework. The document is placed at the front of portfolios for easy reference by learners and assessors. Learners are assessed regularly throughout their learning programme.

62. Training is satisfactory and is monitored by the company. Trainers are well qualified and provide learners with good training. A significant proportion of training is on an individual basis which allows the training to be tailored to meet the needs of individual learners. Learning resources for key skills are good and learners are provided with resources that are specific to their individual needs. However, there is a very limited range of resources to develop learners' understanding of administration.

63. Learners have a high regard for the occupational competence and supportive approach of assessors. Learners talk freely to assessors about their progress towards their qualifications and issues arising at work that impact on their progress. Assessors identify potential barriers to achievement and take positive steps to overcome them. For example, a learner who was nervous about formal examinations was provided with the opportunity to complete an IT key skills test in the workplace. Another learner was also provided with a key skills examination in the workplace because she could not be released by her employer and she was nervous of using public transport. Learners who experience difficulty producing written evidence are encouraged to use computers or to dictate to assessors who record the learners' responses. Assessors respond positively to changes in learners' personal circumstance. For example, a learner who was moving to another part of the country was helped to achieve the NVQ more quickly to enhance her employment opportunities. Learners who are at risk of losing employment are given personal support. For example, in one case the frequency of assessor visits was increased to a weekly basis to improve the support provided for the learner and to improve the communication between employer, learner and assessor.

64. Arrangements to assess learners' literacy and numeracy skills during their induction are satisfactory. IPS uses a computer-based initial assessment system that provides a detailed analysis of learners' literacy, numeracy and IT skills. These, together with their

support needs, are identified at induction. Most learners are working at the correct level of qualification. Additional support in literacy and numeracy is effectively delivered through a key skills tutor.

65. Learners and assessors agree detailed action plans at each assessment visit. The action plans identify NVQ elements and key skills as well as specific areas of knowledge on which learners should focus in order to progress. Learners make very effective use of the action plans to guide their learning and evidence collection. The action plans take account of the learners' workload and personal circumstances. Learners feel confident enough to contact assessors to agree amendments to the action plans if work-related activities impact on their achievement. The progress learners make towards completion of the action plan is reviewed at each assessment visit and a new action plan is agreed. The action plans and the degree to which they have been achieved are discussed with employers. Employers value the detailed information that the action plans provide. In addition to the detailed action plans, medium-term action plans are drawn up with learners at reviews. These are very helpful in assisting learners to understand their progress and how they can improve their progress. IPS has recently introduced a new system to monitor the progress of learners through their achievement of the targets identified through action-planning. The system is effective in monitoring whether learners are exceeding, meeting or are experiencing serious difficulties in achieving their progress targets.

### **Leadership and management**

66. Internal verification is satisfactory. All portfolios are internally verified and there are sampling plans that ensure that 25 per cent of elements are internally verified over time. All assessments carried out by inexperienced assessors are internally verified. Assessors are observed by internal verifiers on a planned basis. Internal verifiers telephone learners to monitor the quality of the assessments.

67. Many of the managerial arrangements for the programme are informal. There is good communication within the team and regular team meetings which are also assessment standardisation meetings. The administration team makes an effective contribution to the overall strategic management of the company, but there is little strategic planning within administration. The gender and ethnic balance of learners recruited and their achievement is monitored on a regular basis and trends are identified.

68. Administration staff were involved in the development of the self-assessment report which accurately identifies many of the strengths and weaknesses. However, some of the strengths are no more than normal practice.

**Health, social care & public services****Grade 4**

Programmes inspected	Number of learners	Contributory grade
Work-based learning for young people	116	4

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

**Strengths**

- extensive support for learners
- good communication
- effective measures to improve retention rates

**Weaknesses**

- poor achievement rates
- slow progress of some learners in completing units
- limited range of teaching and learning strategies in training sessions
- insufficient access to additional learning materials for some learners

**Achievement and standards**

69. Retention rates have shown a marked improvement. In 2002, 59 per cent of all learners were retained, compared with 30 per cent in 2000. This trend is being sustained with current half-year figures for 2003-04 showing an 83 per cent improvement on the previous year. There were no significant differences in the rates between foundation modern apprentices and advanced modern apprentices.

70. Portfolios are well presented and are generally satisfactory. However, in some there is little cross-referencing across units. Evidence for key skills is presented in a separate portfolio and generally does not relate to evidence for the NVQs. Many employers commented on the improvements in work practice, personal confidence and motivation of the learners while on programme.

71. Completion rates for the full framework are poor. The rate was 3.4 per cent in 2000 and 1.4 per cent in 2002 for advanced modern apprentices. There were no completions for foundation modern apprentices in 2000 and 2002. There was some achievement of NVQs at both levels. The foundation modern apprentices had a 5 per cent achievement rate in 2000 and the advanced modern apprentices had a 22 per cent achievement rate. In 2002 the achievement rate for advanced modern apprentices was 15 per cent. These figures are well below national rates. The progress of some learners is slow. Some learners who started in August 2003 are still completing the introduction units. The attainment of key skills is poor, but there are indications of some improvements in the past six months.

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		1999-2000								
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	
	Number of starts	23		38		73		84		43							
Retained*	1		4		34		28		10	23							
Successfully completed	0		18		38		56		33	77							
Still in learning	21		20		10		6		2	5							

\*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	34		25		18		12									
Retained*	2		3	12	10		7	58									
Successfully completed	2		0	0	1		0	0									
Still in learning	29		14	56	3		3	25									

\*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														
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	
	Number of starts	5		4													
Retained*	0		1														
Successfully completed	0		1														
Still in learning	5		3														

\*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

72. Learners are extensively supported by employers and trainers. They value the accessibility of trainers and are able to contact them easily between training sessions. Some make good use of this facility. Learners attend an induction at the start of their programme. An initial assessment on key skills and preferred learning styles together with a detailed interview is carried out to help guide learners on to the right level of programme and identify any additional support needs. Good support is given to learners

who have dyslexia and dyspraxia.

73. Learners benefit from good communication between employers and trainers. All employers speak highly of the consistency of visits and information received. Trainers meet with the manager or a senior member of staff before or after each training session to update them on the learners' progress, brief them on the work planned for the session and identify any support learners may need for their portfolio of evidence. Training sessions take place every three weeks and are scheduled six months in advance. This enables employers to arrange work rotas which allow learners to attend. Some employers also attend these training sessions. Learners' progress is regularly reviewed and clear targets are set. Learners, trainers and employers each have a copy of the review paperwork. Learners who miss training sessions or are making slow progress are identified and action plans are agreed to help keep them on programme.

74. The range of teaching and learning strategies used in training sessions is limited. Trainers rely almost exclusively on talking through unit booklets and exploring case studies and associated questions with learners. There was no basic training aids such as flip charts. Some of the learning environments do not reflect the learning taking place, or stimulate learners or offer reinforcement of learning. None of the sessions observed were less than satisfactory but in most there was insufficient checking of the learners' understanding of the context of their work placement. In all sessions, learners reported being unable to make progress because they did not understand what was required. In joint training sessions of foundation modern apprentices and advanced modern apprentices, advanced modern apprentices were not sufficiently challenged and foundation modern apprentices had insufficient explanation and amplification. In workplace training there is an over-reliance on oral instruction and feedback. The care team has appropriate training qualifications and professional backgrounds.

75. There is insufficient access to additional learning materials for some learners. In training sessions there was little reference to other learning materials and no use of audiovisual materials to meet preferred learning styles. Not all learners have easy access to resource and study materials at the two centres, including access to the internet. In workplace training there are often no additional resources to support learning. There are few references to other sources of information to enhance learning. Most learners used colleagues in the workplace and policies and procedures for information.

76. Standards of assessment and internal verification are generally satisfactory. There tends to be an over-reliance on oral feedback to help learners understand how to improve. There is some inconsistency in the evidence used to support judgements on assessment. Internal verification reports which give feedback to assessors sometimes have insufficient detail. A new reporting system, called ABCD, identifies whether learners are ahead or behind target. This triggers remedial action to support learners. A new monitoring system gives learners a clear indication of their progress on individual units and what work remains to be done. Additional assessors have been appointed to speed up the completion of workplace observations.

77. There is an initial assessment and those identified with literacy, numeracy and

language needs are advised to work towards the NVQ rather than the full framework. Learners who have additional needs such as dyslexia are referred to staff who have specific training. Initial assessment includes a key skills assessment online, and an individual key skills learning plan is prepared. All care learners have frequent visits from trainers. Extra help is given to help them build new portfolios. There is no clear strategy for encouraging employers to support learners who have literacy, numeracy and language needs.

### **Leadership and management**

78. The members of the care team communicate well with each other on daily operational activities. Effective measures have been devised to improve retention rates. All trainers were involved in the development of initiatives to improve the quality of training through the production of unit booklets, and to improve the monitoring of learners' progress and more recently the achievement rate for NVQs. The team has a snapshot picture of the progress of each learner and what remedial action is needed. Staff development and training is good. Staff have or are working towards the internal verifier award. One member of the team is studying for a masters degree. Most attend regular training to update and extend their skills and knowledge. The care team is not clear on how to use management information to evaluate the provision.