

INSPECTION REPORT

ETEC (Sunderland) Ltd

03 September 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

ETEC (Sunderland) Ltd

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INSPECTION REPORT

DESCRIPTION OF THE PROVIDER

1. ETEC (Sunderland) Ltd (ETEC) was established in 1991 to provide education and training within the local community. It has three training sites all in the East End and Hendon region of Sunderland. It is a registered company operating on a not-for-profit basis. ETEC trains modern apprentices and learners working towards national vocational qualifications (NVQs) in construction and business administration. Other areas, such as hospitality, sport and leisure, retailing, customer services and transportation, health and social care have too few learners to be inspected separately. ETEC also provides Jobcentre Plus programmes. Foundation programmes are provided under a contractual agreement for other providers.
2. The company is led by a chief executive and a board of four other directors. An operations manager and a team of five managers are responsible for managing each of the company's occupational areas. The senior management team meets each month and reports to the chief executive. The board of directors meets each month to discuss performance and development of the company, and meets annually with the management team.
3. ETEC funds its training provision through Tyne and Wear Learning and Skills Council and Jobcentre Plus. ETEC also carries out many local projects, including some with funding from the European Social Fund neighbourhood renewal fund and the Single Regeneration Budget. ETEC has helped establish partnerships involving voluntary and community groups in Sunderland and has been involved in a range of pilot schemes with local agencies. In 2003, the proportion of school leavers in Sunderland achieving five or more general certificates of secondary education (GCSEs) at grade C and above was 43.1 per cent, compared with an average of 52.6 per cent for England.

SCOPE OF PROVISION

Construction

4. ETEC has 45 learners in construction training programmes. There are two advanced modern apprentices working towards NVQs at level 3, eight foundation modern apprentices working towards NVQs at level 2 and 13 learners working towards NVQs at level 1 and 16 learners working towards NVQs at level 2. One learner is on a New Deal programme and five are on programmes with eQ8, which is a pilot scheme for the Northeast designed to help organisations develop their business. Off-the-job training for bricklaying, painting and decorating, and general construction operatives is carried out at ETEC's training centre, which is adjacent to their main site. Most off-the-job training is part time. Most of ETEC's learners live in Sunderland and are recruited by Connexions or Jobcentre Plus. ETEC's staff support and monitor the learners' progress. The length of training for each trade varies but the average is 42 months for advanced modern apprenticeships and 18 months for foundation modern apprenticeships and NVQ

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programmes. Learners gain work experience through working with a range of employers on domestic and commercial projects across the Northeast.

Business administration, management & professional

5. ETEC provides training for advanced and foundation modern apprentices and NVQ learners in business administration and information technology (IT). There are four foundation modern apprentices and one learner following an NVQ at level 1. All apprentices are employed and NVQ learners attend work placements for a minimum of 16 hours each week. There are seven learners attending the 13-week New Deal 18-24 voluntary sector option. The New Deal learners work towards NVQs or equivalent subject-specific qualifications. Ten learners are following another government-funded training programme called eQ8, which is for employed adults working towards an NVQ at level 2 that lasts for up to 70 hours. There are two staff primarily responsible for the delivery, assessment and verification of qualifications.

ABOUT THE INSPECTION

Number of inspectors	4
Number of inspection days	15
Number of learner interviews	34
Number of staff interviews	25
Number of employer interviews	7
Number of subcontractor interviews	1
Number of locations/sites/learning centres visited	15
Number of partner/external agency interviews	1
Number of visits	7

OVERALL JUDGEMENT

6. The quality of the provision is not adequate to meet the reasonable needs of those receiving it. More specifically, ETEC's leadership and management and quality assurance arrangements are unsatisfactory. Its approach to equality of opportunity is satisfactory. The quality of ETEC's work-based learning in construction, and business administration, management and professional is unsatisfactory.

GRADES

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

Leadership and management	4
Contributory grades:	
Equality of opportunity	3
Quality assurance	4

Construction		4
Contributory areas:	Number of learners	Contributory grade
Construction crafts		
- Work-based learning for young people	39	4
- Other government-funded provision	5	None
- New Deal for young people	1	None

Business administration, management & professional		4
Contributory areas:	Number of learners	Contributory grade
Business administration		
- Other government-funded provision	10	None
- New Deal for young people	7	None
- Work-based learning for young people	5	4

KEY FINDINGS

Achievement and standards

7. **Achievement rates are poor in construction training programmes, with few learners completing modern apprenticeship frameworks.** There is poor retention and achievement on the NVQ; since 1998-99, only 38 learners have completed the programme out of 247 learners who started.

8. **In business administration, retention and achievement rates are low.** In the three-year period from 2001-04, 21 learners started foundation modern apprenticeships or NVQ training in business administration. Of these, only six learners stayed until the end of their programme, with five gaining their qualification.

9. **The development of learners' literacy, numeracy and key skills is insufficient.** Many learners have problems with spelling and grammar and, while ETEC provides some support, this does not fully meet learners' identified needs. Some learners are setting up businesses but are not taught appropriate numeracy skills.

Quality of education and training

10. **In construction, tutors and learning staff give the learners good formal and informal support.** Learners praise staff for their help and support in overcoming their training and personal problems. The working relationship between staff and learners is good. Learners appreciate the respect they receive and for being treated as responsible adults.

11. **Construction learners gain good and varied on-the-job experience** from the building projects carried out by ETEC on its own buildings, or in refurbishing local community buildings.

12. **In business administration, employers' involvement in training is good.** Employers take great care to match the needs of learners to the job role. Employers are sympathetic to the needs of learners and are patient in explaining tasks several times until learners understand what is required of them.

13. **ETEC provides good information and communications technology (ICT) resources in business administration.** Computers at the training centres are of industry standard. All computers are networked with high-speed internet connections. Software is up to date and reflects that used in companies. Learners use well-prepared comprehensive work packs to support independent study.

14. **Learners' progress reviews in construction do not focus sufficiently on learners' progress and issues which affect their progress.** Target-setting at reviews is often unchallenging and without deadlines or clear measurement for achievement. There is insufficient checking of issues concerning equal opportunity and health and safety.

15. **In construction, the inspectors observed several instances of poor and unsafe working practices, both on and off the job.** For example, learners were observed working on site without wearing essential personal protective equipment.

16. **ETEC's training facilities are incomplete.** Dust from the building work is damaging learners' painting and decorating work. The associated noise from the building work is excessive and affects the classroom used for background knowledge.

17. **Planning of learning and monitoring of learners' progress in business administration are poor.** Learning plans list NVQ units but deadlines are not set. There are no specific identified learning needs on these plans. The skill scan identifies job activities, but not the need for training. Many learners have literacy and numeracy needs but none of the learning plans state that literacy development is required.

18. **In business administration, learners' progress reviews are often used as an assessment-planning tool and not as a holistic review of overall progress.** Targets set are insufficient to complete the NVQ in the time specified. Many learners are close to completing their planned time on the programme but still have a substantial amount of work to complete.

Leadership and management

19. **ETEC has developed good strategies to develop the company while maintaining its commitment to community development and education in the Sunderland area.** The management has identified and recognised opportunities, such as the purchase of new properties, to enable improvements to the environment that learners experience for their learning.

20. **ETEC effectively promotes participation and progression into learning.** It lives up to its aims that all prospective learners should be offered a place if the company can provide appropriate training and support. ETEC has successfully widened participation among learners with specific support needs.

21. **Most staff are aware of their responsibilities towards the promotion of equal opportunities and diversity, and they receive frequent training.** ETEC's staff are skilful at identify learners' needs and successfully give well-targeted support for such problems as low self-esteem, drug-related problems and housing difficulties.

22. ETEC has introduced a new observation of teaching system which ensures that all tutors are observed at least once a year. The documents used have appropriate criteria to guide judgements on teaching performance.

23. ETEC's business management system contains all of the current policies and procedures that guide the business processes. It is incomplete in that not all of the key components of the learners' experience are covered. Key components of the training process do not have detailed procedures to guide staff or fully enable managers to effectively audit what occurs.

24. ETEC schedules a wide range of staff meetings. Minutes of meetings record discussions and actions points identified, but these are not routinely followed up at subsequent meetings.

25. **Actions plans do not focus sufficiently on identified weaknesses in order to provide a remedy.** The selection of targets is without reference to any rationale or strategy to achieve them. Targets are allocated to teams rather than individual staff.

26. **Weaknesses that ETEC identifies do not focus sufficiently on the full range of the learners' experience while they are at the company.** The development plan does not analyse the issues in enough detail to identify the root cause of the weaknesses.

27. **The self-assessment process is ineffective.** It fails to analyse ETEC's performance thoroughly. There is no formal process to guide the self-assessment process. Managers do not have confidence in staff being able to recognise key weaknesses. Staff have contributed to the process by way of staff meetings and awaydays but the current report does not include the views of learners or other external key partners.

Leadership and management

Strengths

- clear strategic direction
- good promotion of equality of opportunity

Weaknesses

- inadequate focus on rectifying weaknesses in the development plan
- incomplete quality assurance systems
- insufficiently thorough self-assessment process

Construction

Construction crafts

Strengths

- good support for learners
- good off-the-job training projects

Weaknesses

- poor retention and achievement rates
- some poor health and safety practices
- some inadequate training facilities
- inadequate progress reviews

Business administration, management & professional

Business administration

Strengths

- good employer involvement in training
- good ICT resources

Weaknesses

- low retention and achievement rates
- inadequate development of learners' literacy, numeracy and key skills
- poor planning of learning and monitoring of progress

WHAT LEARNERS LIKE ABOUT ETEC (SUNDERLAND) LTD:

- friendly, approachable staff and tutors
- interesting projects
- the support that staff give them

WHAT LEARNERS THINK ETEC (SUNDERLAND) LTD COULD IMPROVE:

- the rates of pay
- the speed at which learners progress
- the amount of paperwork on NVQ programmes

KEY CHALLENGES FOR ETEC (SUNDERLAND) LTD:

- develop effective strategies to improve retention and achievement rates
- make better use of data to help develop planning and management decisions
- improve the quality of the self-assessment process
- set measurable targets for improvements to include identified weaknesses
- develop quality assurance systems to meet the needs of the company effectively

DETAILED INSPECTION FINDINGS

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

Grade 4

Strengths

- clear strategic direction
- good promotion of equality of opportunity

Weaknesses

- inadequate focus on rectifying weaknesses in the development plan
- incomplete quality assurance systems
- insufficiently thorough self-assessment process

28. ETEC has developed good, clear strategies to develop the company while maintaining its commitment to community development and education in the Sunderland area.

29. The management has identified and recognised opportunities such as the purchase of new properties to enable improvements to the learning environment. The move to the new premises has enabled the development of custom-designed occupational training areas specifically for the construction trades.

30. ETEC now plans to change the structure of the company, creating two commercial sections in construction and business administration. This development recognises the opportunity for the company to meet identified regional skills shortages in the construction industry and local employment needs.

31. ETEC has developed good communication processes and its staff attend a wide range of regular meetings, which involve them in the strategic decision-making process and ensure that they are kept fully informed of any developments.

32. ETEC has developed a range of good partnerships to support work with challenging youngsters. For example, the local schools' project in construction trades enables children in year 10 to apply for places on the project and attend a training venue on a building site. A seconded member of ETEC's staff manages the project.

33. Some of ETEC's proposed plans contain insufficiently detailed strategies to support their achievement. Business plans do not include financial factors or fully record the potential impact on budgets and income.

34. ETEC has a satisfactory system for maintaining internal communications with staff and learners. There are a wide range of scheduled staff meetings and the minutes record discussions and identify actions points. However, ETEC does not allocate a reference

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number and does not routinely follow them up at subsequent meetings. Specific staff working groups deal with specific areas, such as equality and diversity.

35. ETEC's staff appraisal system is satisfactory. Appraisals are annual and are supported by six-monthly reviews. All staff receive copies of appraisal information from line managers and team leaders before their appraisal. Although a review of all areas of the job role is completed, ETEC does not establish specific targets and use them as measures of performance. ETEC provides good support for identified staff training and development needs. The company also has a scheme for providing support for training unrelated to work. A staff working group decides which applicants meet the criteria. Each year, the company makes a small amount of cash available to support the scheme, which is well supported and appreciated by staff.

36. ETEC's development plan is inadequate to rectify the identified weaknesses. Although the plan lists the strengths and weaknesses from the self-assessment report and include targets for improvements in certain areas of weakness, the actions do not sufficiently focus on the core issue. The weaknesses identified do not sufficiently focus on the full range of the learners' experience while at ETEC. The development plan does not analyse the issues in enough detail to identify the root cause of the weaknesses. The actions listed do not sufficiently focus on the weakness in order to provide a remedy. The selection of targets is without reference to any rationale or strategy to achieve them. The targets are allocated to teams rather than individual staff. Progress reports are insufficiently detailed to monitor the impact against the intended target or identified weakness effectively.

37. The company's approach to supporting the development of learners' literacy, numeracy and language skills in construction is satisfactory, but it is insufficient in business administration. All learners starting at ETEC receive an initial screening of their literacy and numeracy skills and the company completes diagnostic assessments to identify any specific support needs. All of the relevant staff are appropriately qualified. Support is provided in small groups and in individual sessions. ETEC does not fully integrate its literacy, numeracy and language support into its core programme sessions. Some learners decline the support that the company offers.

Equality of opportunity

Contributory grade 3

38. ETEC effectively promotes participation and progression into learning. It lives up to its aims that all prospective learners should be offered a place if it can provide appropriate training and support. The company has been successful in widening participation among learners with specific support needs by effectively removing obstacles to their learning. Recent marketing materials have widened participation among learners from minority ethnic groups and under-represented groups in the construction industry, such as women. Minority ethnic groups represent 2.1 per cent of ETEC's learners, which compares well with 1.9 per cent for the Sunderland area. Thirteen per cent of ETEC's learners have a disability, compared with 10.4 per cent for the Sunderland area. ETEC recognises the significance of its role in working with young people who have previously achieved little educationally. The proportion of young

people with five GCSEs at grades C or above is low in ETEC's recruitment area.

39. Most staff are aware of their responsibilities towards the promotion of equal opportunities and diversity, and they receive frequent training. ETEC's staff are skilful at identifying learners' needs and successfully give well-targeted support for such problems as low self-esteem, drug-related problems and housing difficulties. ETEC also provides financial support by providing learners with equipment they need to help them continue with their training, such as appropriate footwear for learners in construction.

40. ETEC has a comprehensive equality and diversity policy, which is provided for all learners, staff and employers. The policy clearly sets out ETEC's view of issues such as harassment, discrimination and diversity. It contains useful information on the Race Relations (Amendment) Act 2000 and the Disability Discrimination Act 1995. However, the policy does not have any procedure that instructs the learner on how to complain. There are no formal procedures for dealing with complaints and the process is unclear. ETEC has no precise targets for equality of opportunity identified in the policy document.

41. Learners receive satisfactory guidance and training in equality and diversity at induction. Training includes most aspects of legislation, such as that for sex discrimination and disability discrimination. ETEC tests its learners' understanding of equality and diversity during their progress reviews, but only cursorily. Learners' understanding of equality and diversity is insufficiently developed and they have little understanding of their rights and responsibilities.

42. ETEC collects data relating to its learners' ethnicity and diversity. However, while it does analyse some of this data it does not use it to set targets for increasing under-represented groups, and there is no strategy within the business development plan. The company does not use data to monitor the effectiveness of the promotion of equality of opportunity. It does carry out some analysis of data to determine the relative performance of particular groups of learners. Equality and diversity is routinely discussed at management meetings and there is an equality and diversity action group that specifically considers equality and diversity issues.

43. ETEC's training centres mostly have good access for people with restricted mobility. The company has recently installed automatic doors in one of the centres to improve accessibility to the premises, which has a lift to all levels. ETEC commissioned an external access audit and the recommendations they made have been considered in the planning of their new training centre.

Quality assurance

Contributory grade 4

44. ETEC has introduced a new observation teaching system, which is satisfactory. A sampling scheme ensures that all tutors are observed at least once a year. The documents used have appropriate criteria to guide judgements on teaching performance. The observations are graded using a seven-point scale. The feedback to tutors is constructive and focuses on improvement of their performance. They evaluate the system and provide feedback, which indicates that most staff view the process

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positively. There is effective partnership and collaboration with other providers for joint observations in order to standardise assessments.

45. The learners' feedback process is satisfactory and provides ETEC with some valuable information regarding the learners' experience. The system is an innovative e-voting package that allows learners to answer pre-set questions anonymously using a key pad. Participants are analysed with regard to gender, ethnicity and disability. Issues such as support offered and incidents of discrimination or harassment are covered. Reports against each of the questions are produced, but it is unclear how issues identified have been followed up for remedial actions.

46. The internal verification process is satisfactory. Although there is not a detailed policy or procedure contained in the business management system, areas of learning develop documents and apply appropriate systems that meet awarding body requirements. Internal verifiers adequately monitor and observe assessment but in some cases learners' slow progress has not been identified. All of ETEC's assessors and verifiers hold relevant qualifications.

47. ETEC's quality assurance system is incomplete. While its business management system contains all of the current policies and procedures that guide the business processes, it does not cover all of the key aspects of the learners' experience. It is relatively new and based on the international quality assurance standard ISO9001. It consists of 10 quality assurance procedures and these were reviewed in 2004. Although the procedures are well laid out and each are supported by a flowchart, key components of the training process do not have detailed procedures to guide staff or fully enable managers to effectively audit what occurs. Areas of the provision without detailed procedures include the recruitment, selection and inductions for staff and learners, the initial assessment process, learners' progress reviews, remedial action process, staff development and appraisal, and the assessment and verification procedures. The recently introduced observation of teaching process does not have a formal policy and procedure. An internal audit system is included and these do take place, but the system for following up issues is not formalised or clear.

48. ETEC's self-assessment process is ineffective because it does not analyse the company's performance thoroughly. There is no formal process to guide self-assessment and the self-assessment process has been changed each year. Managers do not have confidence in staff being able to recognise key weaknesses. Staff have contributed to the process by way of staff meetings and awaydays but the current report does not include the views of learners or external key partners. The latest version contains a lot of information duplicated from last year's version. Many strengths and weaknesses remain from the previous year.

49. The review process does not sufficiently analyse the company's actual performance against the requirements of the 'Common Inspection Framework'. Much of the content is descriptive and does not critically analyse key aspects of the learners' experience, such as their achievements and standards, and the quality of the teaching and learning.

50. The report does not sufficiently recognise and analyse key weaknesses regarding retention of learners and their poor achievement. Many strengths and weaknesses identified carry over from the previous year. The self-assessment grades are unchanged from 2002-03.

AREAS OF LEARNING

Construction

Construction		4
Contributory areas:	Number of learners	Contributory grade
Construction crafts		
- Work-based learning for young people	39	4
- Other government-funded provision	5	None
- New Deal for young people	1	None

Construction crafts

Strengths

- good support for learners
- good off-the-job training projects

Weaknesses

- poor retention and achievement rates
- some poor health and safety practices
- some inadequate training facilities
- inadequate progress reviews

Achievement and standards

51. Achievement rates are poor, with few learners completing modern apprenticeship frameworks. From 1997 to 2001, only six out of 20 learners completed their advanced modern apprenticeship framework. Since 2001-02, only one learner out of 11 on the foundation modern apprenticeship has completed their framework. There is poor retention and achievement on the NVQ; since 1998-99, only 38 learners have completed the programme out of 247 learners who started. The retention and achievement has declined over this period. Progress for some NVQ learners is slow.

52. Most learners are developing good knowledge and practical skills. Learners' attendance is good. Awards for those learners with 100 per cent attendance over six months have helped to improve their attendance.

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

LSC funded work-based learning																
Advanced apprenticeships	2003-04		2002-03		2001-02		2000-01		1999-2000		1998-99		1997-98			
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
	Number of starts					3		7		4		8		1		
Retained*					0		1	14	2	50	7	88	1	100		
Successfully completed					0		0	0	1	25	5	62	0	0		
Still in learning					2		0	0	0	0	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																
Apprenticeships	2003-04		2002-03		2001-02		2000-01		1999-2000							
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
	Number of starts	6		4		1										
Retained*	0		2		1	100										
Successfully completed	0		0		0	0										
Still in learning	4		3		1	100										

*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		1999-2000		1998-99		1997-98			
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
	Number of starts	13		99		79		39		16		1				
Retained*	0		16		25		10	26	6	38	1	100				
Successfully completed	0		8		18		5	13	6	38	1	100				
Still in learning	10		18		1		0	0	0	0	0	100				

*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

53. Tutors and learning support staff provide the learners with good formal and informal support. Learners praise staff for their help and support in overcoming their training and personal problems. Staff and learners have a good working relationship. Learners appreciate the respect they are given and being treated as responsible adults. Some staff visit learners outside their normal working hours to resolve training and personal problems, such as poor timekeeping and conflicts with employers. Learners gave examples of how staff had helped them to resolve problems and regain worthwhile

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employment. Inspectors observed good learning support sessions on completing evidence for NVQs.

54. Learners gain good and varied off-the-job experience from the building projects carried out by ETEC on its own buildings, or in refurbishing local community buildings. Learners enjoy this challenging work and the associated responsibilities. Most learners develop good practical skills as a result of this type of project work. The building work across the two trades meets expected industry standards.

55. Some of ETEC's training facilities are inadequate. Construction staff have appropriate occupational and assessment qualifications and good industrial experience. There are sufficient hand tools and suitable learning materials for developing learners' background knowledge.

56. The training offered is to industry standards in the two main construction trades of bricklaying and painting and decorating. Learners have an adequate range of workplace opportunities. Employers are mainly sole traders to medium-sized contractors who carry out domestic and industrial work in the private and public sectors. Employers are responsive to learners' needs. Most training sessions observed are satisfactory. Learners have some enrichment activities, including personal development courses run by the Army on sports and outdoor pursuits.

57. Assessment practices are thorough and include assessment planning and briefing of learners to confirm their understanding and procedures. There is good questioning to test learners' background knowledge and clear assessor feedback on the outcome of the assessment. This is then followed by the detailed completion of the relevant NVQ documents. Learners' portfolios are satisfactory and contain fitting standards of work with an adequate range of evidence.

58. Internal verification is satisfactory and meets the needs of the awarding body's standards. There are suitable guidance procedures for sampling and monitoring the performance and assessment documents that assessors use. ETEC provides the assessors with useful critical feedback for their development. External verifiers' reports have minimal action requirements that are quickly resolved.

59. Induction is satisfactory and consists of a week's briefing at ETEC's premises, where learners are provided with useful and well-produced induction materials. Initial assessment is satisfactory and, where appropriate, details of identified weaknesses are passed on to the section for additional learning support. Literacy and numeracy support are satisfactory and is provided by specialist staff who integrate the learning into a construction context and make it relevant to the learners.

60. The inspectors observed several instances of poor and unsafe working practices, both on and off the job. At one work placement, a learner was observed working unsupervised on a roof without scaffolding and guard rails, and without wearing essential personal protective equipment. At another work placement, another learner was observed working on a site unsupervised and without wearing essential personal

protective equipment. Both learners were immediately removed from these sites and their employers once the unsafe practice was discovered. The inspectors observed poor working health and safety practice in workshops, with learners eating food, not wearing essential personal protective equipment, and throwing tools across the workshop.

61. ETEC is in the process of vacating old unsuitable premises and building new workshops in a new building. The training facilities are incomplete and dust from the building work is damaging learners' painting and decorating work. The associated noise from the building work affects the classroom used for background knowledge. Staff and learners used stairs to upper floors without handrails. Temporary barriers are now in place until handrails are fitted. There is no adequate storage for materials or hand tools for painting and decorating or bricklaying. Action plans indicate that this building work should be complete by the second week in November.

62. Learners' progress reviews are inadequate. While they are carried out regularly on site and in the workshops, they do not focus sufficiently on learners' progress and issues that affect their progress. Target-setting at reviews is often unchallenging and without timescales or clear measurement for achievement. There is insufficient checking of issues concerning equal of opportunity, health and safety, and the learners' pastoral requirements. Learners and employers do not receive a copy of reviews but a copy is placed in the learners' files.

Leadership and management

63. ETEC's construction programmes have a number of useful partnerships with the city council and Connexions in developing construction programmes to employers' and learners' needs. Communications with employers are appropriate and meet both parties' needs. Staff are not given individual performance targets. ETEC's management do not evaluate or quality assure the construction training programmes. Staff recognise the need for better time management. The development plan for 2003-06 is inadequate. It is unclear and has no clear, measurable targets to provide adequate monitoring of progress.

64. ETEC has recently recruited six women to its construction training programmes, but the company does not have any learners from minority ethnic groups. Promotion of equality of opportunity in construction is appropriate, but the learners' recall of their equality of opportunity is minimal.

65. The self-assessment report provided a starting point for the inspection. The self-assessment report is insufficiently evaluative and self-critical. Inspectors agreed with some of the identified strengths and weaknesses but found that ETEC had not identified some major weaknesses.

Business administration, management & professional

Business administration, management & professional		4
Contributory areas:	Number of learners	Contributory grade
Business administration		
- Other government-funded provision	10	None
- New Deal for young people	7	None
- Work-based learning for young people	5	4

Business administration

Strengths

- good employer involvement in training
- good ICT resources

Weaknesses

- low retention and achievement rates
- inadequate development of learners' literacy, numeracy and key skills
- poor planning of learning and monitoring of progress

Achievement and standards

66. Retention and achievement are low. In the three-year period from 2001-04, 21 learners started foundation modern apprenticeships or NVQ training in business administration and only six learners stayed until the end of their programme, with five gaining their qualification. However, the three learners who were recruited in the last contract year are still in training. In the same three-year period, 11 learners started foundation modern apprenticeships or NVQ training in IT and only three stayed until the end of their programme, with two completing their qualification. There is only one NVQ learner left on the programme.

67. The standard of learners' work is satisfactory, and most of their portfolios of evidence are well presented. However, many learners are making insufficient progress towards their qualifications, particularly in key skills. One learner who had been working towards key skills for almost six months had not completed much portfolio work, but had been entered for the key skills tests and was awaiting the results.

68. The development of learners' literacy, numeracy and key skills is insufficient. There are 10 learners on the eQ8 programme with literacy and numeracy needs at entry level or level 1 who are not receiving sufficient support. Five of these learners have identified numeracy and support agreed, but this is not yet in place. The other learners do not have any planned learning. It is unclear as to whether there is a formal contractual requirement to provide this support as part of the business administration programme, as many learners have problems with spelling and grammar. While ETEC provides some

support, it does not fully meet the learners' identified needs. Some learners are setting up businesses but are not being taught appropriate numeracy skills. A separate contract has recently been secured to provide this support for ETEC's own eQ8 learners. Most learners registered for key skills programmes are not sufficiently challenged, as they are working towards key skills at their current skill level or below. One NVQ learner who is not attending literacy sessions sat his literacy exam without being adequately prepared.

Quality of education and training

69. The employers' involvement in training is good. They take great care to match the needs of learners to the job role. Employers are sympathetic to the needs of learners and are patient in explaining tasks several times until they understand what is required of them. Employers have a good understanding of what is required to complete an NVQ and one employer has several staff working towards the NVQs. Some learners who were at work experience have been employed by their placements during their training programmes. Some employed learners have been promoted on completion of their training programme.

70. ETEC provides good ICT resources. Computers at the training centres are of industry standard. All computers are networked with high-speed internet connections. Software is up to date and reflects that used in companies. The learners use well-prepared comprehensive work packs to support independent study. Most of them make good use of the equipment and work packs at weekly off-the-job training and for subject-specific training days; for example, internet access and e-mail. Resources to support business administration and literacy, numeracy and key skills are satisfactory.

71. The initial assessment process is comprehensive. It comprises an initial screening for literacy and numeracy, and a further detailed diagnosis of needs. A learning styles assessment is also completed, together with an identification of job activities. Assessment and internal verification of qualifications are also satisfactory. Assessors' judgements are sound. There is a sampling plan for internal verification and feedback to assessors promotes continuous improvement.

72. Formal taught sessions are satisfactory. Tutors use a wide range of resources and teaching methods to meet the needs of learners. Session plans are comprehensive, although they do not always recognise the differing abilities of learners within the classes. The arrangements for delivering literacy and numeracy are unimaginative and they are mainly delivered at the training centre, which does not suit all learners' needs. Key skills support is provided in the workplace but relies heavily on completing test papers. Business administration or IT work from learners' portfolios is not used sufficiently.

73. Learners have a satisfactory understanding of key induction topics, including course content, health and safety, and how to complain.

74. Planning of learning and monitoring of learners' progress are poor. Learning plans

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list NVQ units but do not set time limits. There are no specific identified learning needs on these plans. The skill scan identifies job activities but not the need for training. Many learners have literacy and numeracy needs but none of the learning plans state that literacy development is required. Those learners with numeracy needs have a record on their learning plan but no clear, measurable targets for those who want support. NVQ assessors are unaware of learners' detailed literacy and numeracy needs. Learners' progress reviews are often used as an assessment-planning tool and not as a holistic review of overall progress. Targets set are insufficient to complete the NVQ in the time specified. Many learners are close to completing their planned time on the programme but still have a substantial amount of work to complete.

Leadership and management

75. Informal communications are good. Two staff members work closely together to assess and verify learners' work and to discuss any issues that arise.

76. Staff and learners' understanding of equality and diversity are satisfactory. Learners know who to go to if they are not happy with their training. One staff member provides training to employees through the eQ8 programme on equality and diversity at work.

77. The company's most recent self-assessment report is similar to that of the previous year. However, inspectors agreed with two strengths and two weaknesses but identified an additional weakness in literacy, numeracy and key skills development. The report failed to recognise the significance of the weaknesses.

78. Internal verification arrangements are satisfactory. This includes sampling plans, on-going internal verification and constructive feedback that ETEC provides for assessors. The company also carries out observation of assessors.

79. Staff appraisal is completed twice each year and staff development needs are appropriately identified. Staff are not given individual targets for retention and achievement. There are team targets but performance against these targets is not measured consistently and there is confusion over actual performance; for example, the difference between a participation rate and retention rate.