

# REINSPECTION REPORT

## **In-Comm Training Services Limited Reinspection**

**21 October 2004**



ADULT LEARNING  
INSPECTORATE

## Grading

Inspectors use a seven-point scale to summarise their judgements about the quality of learning sessions. The descriptors for the seven grades are:

- *grade 1 - excellent*
- *grade 2 - very good*
- *grade 3 - good*
- *grade 4 - satisfactory*
- *grade 5 - unsatisfactory*
- *grade 6 - poor*
- *grade 7 - very poor.*

Inspectors use a five-point scale to summarise their judgements about the quality of provision in occupational/curriculum areas. The same scale is used to describe the quality of leadership and management, which includes quality assurance and equality of opportunity. The descriptors for the five grades are:

- *grade 1 - outstanding*
- *grade 2 - good*
- *grade 3 - satisfactory*
- *grade 4 - unsatisfactory*
- *grade 5 - very weak.*

The two grading scales relate to each other as follows:

SEVEN-POINT SCALE	FIVE-POINT SCALE
grade 1	grade 1
grade 2	
grade 3	grade 2
grade 4	grade 3
grade 5	grade 4
grade 6	grade 5
grade 7	

## Adult Learning Inspectorate

The Adult Learning Inspectorate (ALI) was established under the provisions of the *Learning and Skills Act 2000* to bring the inspection of all aspects of adult learning and work-based learning within the remit of a single inspectorate. The ALI is responsible for inspecting a wide range of government-funded learning, including:

- work-based learning for all people over 16
- provision in further education colleges for people aged 19 and over
- the University for Industry's **learndirect** provision
- Adult and Community Learning
- learning and job preparation programmes funded by Jobcentre Plus
- education and training in prisons, at the invitation of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Prisons.

Inspections are carried out in accordance with the *Common Inspection Framework* by teams of full-time inspectors and part-time associate inspectors who have knowledge of, and experience in, the work which they inspect. All providers are invited to nominate a senior member of their staff to participate in the inspection as a team member.

# **REINSPECTION REPORT**

## **In-Comm Training Services Limited Reinspection**

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## REINSPECTION REPORT

### DESCRIPTION OF THE PROVIDER

1. In-Comm Training Services Limited (In-Comm) is a private limited company which was established in 1982. The company is owned by three shareholders, two of whom are its managing directors. In April 2001, the company was re-structured and its business operation became In-Comm Business Services Limited. Both companies operate from the same premises in Aldridge in the West Midlands. The company works in partnership with three Group Training Associations (GTA); Birmingham Group Training Association, West Midlands Group Training Association and Group Manufacturers Association, who between them represent over one hundred companies throughout the West Midlands and Shropshire. The chairman of the GTA is a non-executive director of In-Comm.

2. The senior management team of both companies comprises two managing directors, a training services manager and a business services manager. There are a further 22 staff. The overall structure of the company remains the same following the previous inspection, however, the role of the training manager has been redefined and one member of staff now has responsibility for In-Comm's quality assurance arrangements.

3. In-Comm contracts solely with The Black Country Learning and Skills Council for work-based learning for 91 learners. The company offers foundation and advanced modern apprenticeships in engineering, technology and manufacturing; business administration, management and professional; and retailing, customer services and transportation. At the time of the inspection the numbers of learners in retailing, customer services and transportation were too few for this provision to be inspected and graded separately. The company provides some on-the-job training and assessment in its learning centres and uses subcontractors for off-the-job training. Currently, In-Comm uses the local further education colleges for some off-the-job training and assessment.

4. In-Comm recruits most of its learners from the Aldridge wards in Walsall. These wards have a minority ethnic population of 3 per cent, compared with 13.4 per cent for Walsall. The proportion of school leavers in Walsall with five or more general certificates of secondary education at grade C or above is 40.6 per cent, compared with 47.9 per cent nationally.

### SCOPE OF PROVISION

#### Engineering, technology & manufacturing

5. There are 69 employed learners on work-based learning programmes in engineering. Twenty-seven of these learners are advanced modern apprentices and 42 are foundation modern apprentices. The planned duration of engineering programmes varies between 12 and 42 months. Most modern apprentices follow a level 2 national vocational qualification (NVQ) training programme in performing engineering operations. Training for this takes place at In-Comm's training centre or in the workplace. Some learners are

## IN-COMM TRAINING SERVICES LIMITED REINSPECTION

working towards an NVQ at level 2 in performing manufacturing operations. Advanced modern apprentices attend local colleges for the background knowledge aspect of the modern apprenticeship framework. In-Comm's assessors provide training for the background knowledge aspect of the foundation modern apprenticeship framework at the training centre. In-Comm's assessors, who visit learners in the workplace every four weeks, carry out assessment of learners' skills when appropriate and formally review learners' progress every 12 weeks. In-Comm also provides additional courses to meet the needs of individual learners and employers.

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

6. There are 21 learners on business administration programmes, most of whom are in full-time employment. Eight are advanced modern apprentices working towards a level 3 NVQ in business administration, and 13 are foundation modern apprentices who are working towards a level 2 NVQ in business administration. Nineteen of the learners are women. No learners have a disability. All learners have their literacy and numeracy skills initially assessed. Training staff visit learners at least once a month to plan and agree actions to promote progress and to assess performance. Work-based assessors also provide support and guidance to help prepare learners for the technical certificate. A formal review of progress is completed every 12 weeks.

## **ABOUT THE REINSPECTION**

Number of inspectors	3
Number of inspection days	16
Number of learner interviews	22
Number of staff interviews	15
Number of employer interviews	9
Number of subcontractor interviews	2
Number of locations/sites/learning centres visited	1
Number of visits	4

## **OVERALL JUDGEMENT**

7. The ALI's inspection in July 2003 found that training in engineering, technology and manufacturing was satisfactory. However, the provision in business administration, management and professional was unsatisfactory. The company's arrangements for leadership and management, including quality assurance, were unsatisfactory. However, In-Comm's arrangements for equality of opportunity were satisfactory. At the end of the reinspection process, all aspects of the provision were found to be satisfactory.

## GRADES

### Grades awarded at previous inspection

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

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

<b>Engineering, technology &amp; manufacturing</b>	<b>3</b>
Contributory grades:	
Work-based learning for young people	3

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

### Grades awarded at reinspection

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

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

<b>Engineering, technology &amp; manufacturing</b>	<b>3</b>
Contributory grades:	
Work-based learning for young people	3

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

## KEY FINDINGS

### Achievement and standards

**8. Many engineering learners achieve a wide range of good additional qualifications.**

Health and safety courses are provided at either the training centre or in the workplace. Courses are relevant to the industries in which learners are employed and include manual handling, abrasive wheel regulations, crane safety and environmental health.

**9. There is good development of engineering learners' skills.** After a very short time of being in training, learners are competent in basic engineering operations. On entering the workplace they quickly become part of the engineering team.

**10. Some engineering learners progress slowly towards the completion of their modern apprenticeship framework.** But their rate of progress has significantly improved since the previous inspection.

**11.** Most engineering learners' portfolios are satisfactory, although some are good. Many portfolios include diverse evidence and contain digital photographs. Portfolios are well indexed and easy to navigate. Learners know how far they have progressed in the programme and what they have to do to complete the framework.

**12. There is good achievement of the technical certificate.** Business administration learners' portfolios are well structured with a good range of appropriate evidence from the workplace.

**13.** At the previous inspection, achievement rates were poor for business administration learners. The achievement rate is still poor but there is evidence of satisfactory progress by learners currently in training.

### Quality of education and training

**14. There are good resources in the workplace.** A wide range of engineering and manufacturing companies are used as work placements. Employers range from rare metal refining and mechanical component manufacturing factories to precision, optical lens production. Most of these companies manufacture products that are produced to a demanding accuracy and use up-to-date technology in their production.

**15. There is good vocational support for learners.** Assessors visit learners in the workplace every four weeks. These visits are well recorded on learners' action plans, where targets are set for the next visit. Often, assessors act as mentors and assist learners in identifying evidence and guide learners in portfolio production. All learners are supplied with a comprehensive assessment planning form, which clearly states what evidence is required to prove competence in each NVQ unit.



16. All learners are assessed by the company to identify slow or unmotivated learners so In-Comm can more closely monitor them. Once additional monitoring proves successful the learner's risk category is reduced. All learners' risk category is clearly indicated on an office wall chart with colour-coded tags.

17. **For business administration learners, there is very effective target-setting to promote progress.** Clear and measurable targets are agreed with learners.

18. **There is good support for learners.** Training staff visit learners in the workplace at least once every month and are responsive and flexible in the support they offer.

19. **There is insufficient support for learners with identified literacy and numeracy needs.** The support required is identified and assessors are allocated to support the learners. However, this arrangement has only been recently introduced. Some learners have not been receiving the support to improve their literacy and numeracy skills or to maintain their motivation in developing these skills.

### **Leadership and management**

20. **In-Comm has been very effective in developing good and longstanding partnerships and works very well with these partners.** The company's good working relationship with employers has led to very effective collaborative working for planning and supporting learners' training and skill development.

21. **Since the previous inspection the company has developed a comprehensive system for monitoring and managing learners' progress.** Using clear and good criteria, learners' progress is risk assessed and a colour-coded system is used on a wall chart displaying all learners' risk categories. This information is very well recorded on a computer system for comprehensive and detailed analysis.

22. In-Comm has made significant progress in the management of its subcontracted training to local colleges. The company has clear agreements with its subcontractors identifying each of their roles and responsibilities in providing training for the company's learners. The subcontractors routinely provide reports about learners' progress and share information about the quality of training with the company.

23. **The company has not effectively used its good range of employers and community links to develop effective strategies to promote and attract learners from the diverse society which it serves.**

24. **In-Comm is not sufficiently thorough in the quality assurance of some aspects of the training programme.** Some very effective aspects of the quality assurance arrangements are not completely reflected in the company's new policies.

## IN-COMM TRAINING SERVICES LIMITED REINSPECTION

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

### **Leadership and management**

#### **Strengths**

- good development of partnerships and partnership working
- very good management information system to monitor and promote learners' progress

#### **Weaknesses**

- slow development of literacy and numeracy support
- insufficiently thorough quality assurance of some aspects of training
- insufficient actions to attract under-represented groups to training

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

#### **Strengths**

- good achievement of additional qualifications
- good development of learners' skills
- good resources in the workplace
- particularly good vocational support for learners

#### **Weaknesses**

- slow completion of the modern apprenticeship framework by some learners
- insufficient initial support for learners with identified support needs

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

#### **Strengths**

- good achievement of the technical certificate
- very effective target-setting to promote progress
- good support for learners.

#### **Weaknesses**

- poor completion of the modern apprenticeship framework
- insufficient literacy and numeracy support for some learners

## DETAILED REINSPECTION FINDINGS

### LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

### Grade 3

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

#### Strengths

- good development of partnerships and partnership working
- very good management information system to monitor and promote learners' progress

#### Weaknesses

- slow development of literacy and numeracy support
- insufficiently thorough quality assurance of some aspects of training
- insufficient actions to attract under-represented groups to training

25. In-Comm has been very effective in developing good and longstanding partnerships and works very well with these partners. The company's good working relationship with employers has led to very effective collaborative working for planning and supporting learners' training and skills development. In-Comm supports local initiatives to promote careers through work-based learning. For example, the company has been involved in developing the pathfinders provision. Since then it has worked well with a local school to provide a young apprenticeships programme for 20 students. Of these, seven have joined a work-based learning programme after leaving school. The company's partnership with the GTAs has provided opportunities so that the company can improve its provision.

26. Since the previous inspection, the company has developed a comprehensive system for monitoring and managing the progress of its learners. The training manager and the assessors thoroughly discuss the progress of all learners after each progress review. Using clear and good criteria, learners' progress is risk assessed and a colour-coded system is used on a wall chart displaying all learners' risk category. The wall chart is placed so that directors and managers have a clear and constant overview of all learners' progress. This information is very well recorded on a computer system for comprehensive and detailed analysis. If a learner is identified as being at risk of leaving the training programme without achieving all the targets on their individual learning plan, the training manager and assessors agree and record clear and measurable actions to support the learner in completing the modern apprenticeship framework. In most cases, additional resources and visits are provided. The training manager and one of the directors comprehensively review learners' progress every two weeks. Managers pay special attention to the progress of learners at risk of leaving the programme.

27. The company has a satisfactory business planning process. It uses a wide range of

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information to plan its improvements, which is well reflected in its development action plan. For example, after the previous inspection, In-Comm's development plan included a wide range of actions to improve its provision, such as redefining the role of the training manager and putting in place better arrangements for the management of the business administration provision. Management of the business administration, which was unsatisfactory at the previous inspection, is now satisfactory. In-Comm has completed a significant number of the actions in the post-inspection action plan. However, some of the actions are more recent and too early to be fully evaluated.

28. In-Comm has made significant progress in the management of its subcontracted training to local colleges. The company has used the Adult Learning Inspectorate's Excalibur website well to develop its systems which are now satisfactory but were weak at the previous inspection. In-Comm has clear agreements with its subcontractors identifying each of their roles and responsibilities in providing training for the company's learners. The subcontractors routinely provide reports about learners' progress and share information about the quality of training with the company. The company's representative can now attend subcontractors' curriculum development meetings, although this agreement is very recent and has not yet been fully implemented.

29. The management of resources is satisfactory. All assessors are well experienced have appropriate teaching qualifications, or are working towards them. The internal verifiers are also appropriately qualified. Since the previous inspection, a satisfactory range of resources have been introduced for business administration learners.

30. Appraisal and staff development arrangements are satisfactory. Staff appraisals are carried out once a year, during which the assessor's professional development, work allocation and targets are discussed. For example since the previous inspection, staff have attended literacy and numeracy support training sessions, and have received training on quality assurance and self-assessment. Staff are responsible for maintaining their own record of professional development which incorporates all the training they have received.

31. The company's management of information is satisfactory. One member of staff is responsible for all aspects of producing accurate data about learners at appropriate times. The company uses a commercially designed management information system, which provides data on learners' achievement, retention, gender, ethnicity and disability. There is now satisfactory use of this information to identify trends in learners' performance and for strategic planning. In-Comm has also developed its own system for monitoring the progress of the learners.

32. There has been slow development of literacy and numeracy support for learners, which was unsatisfactory at the previous inspection. The company has developed a clear literacy and numeracy strategy and an action plan. All learners' literacy, numeracy and language needs are now systematically identified through initial assessment. This information is well recorded on learners' individual learning plans. In-Comm has put in place arrangements for the support of learners with literacy and numeracy needs which include the support from assessors and a subcontractor. However, most of this is very

recent. Not all learners benefit from this arrangement. For example, even though all assessors have attended a number of brief training seminars, they do not always use an effective approach to support learners with literacy and numeracy needs. The company uses a subcontractor for more thorough support of learners based at the subcontractor's training centre. For those learners who can attend these sessions, the support is satisfactory. However, some learners cannot attend these sessions. All assessors have just started on a one-year accredited training course for the support of learners with literacy and numeracy support needs.

### **Equality of opportunity**

### **Contributory grade 3**

33. The company's promotion of equality of opportunity during learners' progress reviews was inadequate at the previous inspection. However, this is now satisfactory. Most assessors discuss equal opportunities topics in detail during progress reviews and encourage learners to gain a better understanding of these topics in the workplace. For example, in one progress review there was good discussion of the needs of customers and staff who have restricted mobility. More recently, the company has developed a detailed prompt questionnaire and discussion topics for assessing learners' understanding of equality of opportunity. In-Comm has also recently produced a good newsletter explaining equality of opportunity to employers.

34. Since the previous inspection, the company has reviewed its equal opportunities policy. It now covers the legislative requirements. There are also detailed procedures covering what learners should do if they experience bullying or harassment. Learners receive clear guidelines on how to make a complaint or express their concerns. Learners receive equal opportunities information during their induction. They also receive a booklet and participate in some discussions. Learners have a clear understanding of their rights and responsibilities in relation to equality of opportunity.

35. The company is developing a strategy to comply with the Race Relations (Amendment) Act 2000 for the recruitment of its staff. Currently In-Comm monitors the proportion of its staff from minority ethnic groups and that of its staff with disabilities.

36. There is satisfactory collection and analysis of equal opportunities data on learners' gender, ethnicity and disability. This information is used to monitor the recruitment of the learners. However, In-Comm does not use this information effectively to promote its training provision. The access arrangements for learners who have restricted mobility are adequate at the company's premises and those of most employers.

37. In-Comm carries out insufficient actions to attract under-represented groups to learning. The company has been effective in increasing the number of women learners on engineering programmes to 13 per cent, which is good. However, there are very few learners from minority ethnic communities. The company has not effectively used its good range of employers and community links to develop effective strategies to promote and attract learners from the diverse society which it serves.

## Quality assurance

## Contributory grade 3

38. The company's quality assurance arrangements which were unsatisfactory at the previous inspection, are now satisfactory. In-Comm has fully revised its quality assurance policies and has a detailed and effective set of procedures for monitoring and improving most aspects of its training processes. The policies have had a significant impact on the provision, especially in improving initial assessment, progress reviews, arrangements with subcontractors, internal verification and self-assessment. There is a clear plan to audit these procedures. Most staff have a good awareness of how these procedures are implemented and how they can improve the quality of training. While the audit plan is very recent, it has already been effective in identifying and improving weaknesses in some areas such as learners' progress reviews and target-setting.

39. In-Comm's quality assurance of subcontractors was weak at the previous inspection, but is now satisfactory. The company has made significant progress in this area. It now has a suitable set of procedures to audit the quality of the training of its subcontractors and has implemented some aspects of these policies very well. For example there are now arrangements for a representative from the company to observe training provided by the subcontractors. However, it is too early to evaluate the impact of this arrangement.

40. The arrangements for internal verification which were unsatisfactory at the previous inspection, are now satisfactory. There are standardisation meetings and there is a clear plan of verification. The issues identified through the verification process are thoroughly investigated. Very recently some assessors have been observed and written feedback has been provided, which has improved the consistency and thoroughness of assessments. There is a system for recording corrective actions, which have been taken as a result of internal verification.

41. Following the previous inspection, the company has revised its arrangements and questionnaires for gathering feedback. Learners and employers have good opportunities to express their views, and In-Comm makes effective use of this information to improve aspects of its provision.

42. The self-assessment process, which was unsatisfactory at the previous inspection, is now effective. However, some parts of the self-assessment report are not sufficiently evaluative. Through discussions, staff have gained a clear understanding of self-assessment. The most recent self-assessment report has identified many of the strengths and weaknesses identified by inspectors. In-Comm has a clear development plan based on the self-assessment report. However, In-Comm does not routinely involve learners and key stakeholders in its self-assessment process.

43. In-Comm has made good progress in implementing its quality assurance policies and procedures. However, In-Comm is not sufficiently thorough in the quality assurance of some aspects of the training programme. For example, some of the observation of the training sessions is not evaluative and does not adequately identify areas for improvement. Most of In-Comm's policies are still based on ISO 9001, which is an

international quality assurance standard. However, some very effective aspects of the quality assurance arrangements are not completely reflected in the company's new policies. For example, some very good aspects of the progress review process are not fully included in the quality assurance policies.

## AREAS OF LEARNING

### Engineering, technology & manufacturing

Grade 3

Programmes inspected	Number of learners	Contributory grade
Work-based learning for young people	69	3

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

#### Strengths

- good achievement of additional qualifications
- good development of learners' skills
- good resources in the workplace
- particularly good vocational support for learners

#### Weaknesses

- slow completion of the modern apprenticeship framework by some learners
- insufficient initial support for learners with identified support needs

#### Achievement and standards

44. Many learners achieve a wide range of good additional qualifications. Health and safety courses are offered by In-Comm and employers. Courses are relevant to the industries in which learners are employed and include manual handling, abrasive wheel regulations, crane safety and environmental health. Some learners are working towards higher national qualifications, which are in excess of the requirements of the modern apprenticeship framework. Courses are also arranged on quality assurance or specific machine operations. Learners participate well on these courses. This strength was recognised at the previous inspection and in the self-assessment report.

45. There is good development of learners' skills. After a very short time of being in training, learners are competent in basic engineering operations. On entering the workplace they quickly become part of the engineering team. Some learners are trained in factories whose products demanded high quality engineering skills. One learner who had only been working in a factory for three months was acting as an inspector. Some learners have progressed onto shift work and working on their own, albeit under supervision. Some work-based manufacturing learners reported that their confidence and their knowledge of health and safety had improved since starting the training programme. Most learners were working accurately in engineering environments.

46. Most learners' portfolios are satisfactory, although some are good. Portfolios are well indexed and easy to navigate. Learners know how far they have progressed in their



programmes and what they have to do to complete the modern apprenticeship framework. Many portfolios include diverse evidence and contain digital photographs. One portfolio viewed contained effective video clips to show competence in manufacturing operations.

47. Learners make slow progress towards completing their modern apprenticeship frameworks. At the previous inspection, there was poor framework completion rates. Since then, 17 advanced modern apprentices and 11 foundation modern apprentices have completed their framework. This has improved achievement rates. Of the four foundation modern apprentices who started training in 2001-02, two learners are still working towards their qualification and one learner has completed the framework. Of those learners who started their training in 2003-04, 50 per cent have completed the framework.

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

48. There are good resources in the workplace. In-Comm uses a wide range of engineering and manufacturing companies for work placements. These range from rare metal refining and mechanical component manufacturing factories to precision, optical lens production. Most of these companies manufacture quality products that are produced to a demanding accuracy and use up-to-date technology. Learners receive training on equipment that is good and current to particular industries. The experience of learners' colleagues is good and they are willing to pass on their expertise to learners. In one factory, nearly the entire workforce has NVQs. Many colleagues are willing to act as NVQ advisers. In another factory, resources are particularly good, enabling the whole level 2 NVQ in manufacturing operations to be carried out in the factory. Resources in the training centre are satisfactory for the level 2 NVQ in performing engineering operations. Computers have recently been installed for training in computer-aided design at the training centre.

49. There is good vocational support for learners. Assessors visit learners in the workplace every four weeks. These visits are well recorded on learners' action plans, where targets are set for the next visit. Often, assessors act as mentors and assist learners in identifying evidence and guide learners in portfolio production. In some factories, training is formally planned and learners quickly gain a good overview of the employer's business. All learners are supplied with a comprehensive assessment-planning form, which clearly states what evidence is required to prove competence in each NVQ unit. All learners are assessed by the company to identify slow or unmotivated learners so In-Comm can more closely monitor them. Once additional monitoring proves successful, the learner's risk category is reduced. All learners' risk categories are clearly indicated on an office wall chart with colour-coded tags. One learner, who lacks confidence in producing written work, has supplied evidence in video form.

50. Assessment is satisfactory. Assessments are carried out continuously in the training centre and assessors visit learners in the workplace every four weeks. The assessor visits

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the 10 learners who are working towards the production and manufacturing operation qualification every week. Learners' portfolios contain a wide range of evidence. Several learners use digital photographs and one learner has observation evidence presented on a DVD. Internal verification is satisfactory.

51. There is insufficient support for learners with identified literacy and numeracy needs. At the previous inspection, a weakness was identified in initial assessment. Since then, In-Comm has started to record the results of initial assessment on learners' individual learning plans. The support required is identified and assessors are allocated to learners. However, this arrangement has only been recently introduced. Some learners have not been receiving the support to improve their literacy and numeracy skills or to maintain their motivation in developing these skills.

### **Leadership and management**

52. Leadership of the engineering programme is satisfactory. There is a clear management structure. Staff meetings are held every week. The management team has been effective in improving the weaknesses identified at the previous inspection. This has been particularly noticeable in the number of modern apprenticeships that have been completed since then. Training in the centre is well managed and the progress of each learner is closely monitored.

53. Learners' understanding of the grievance and NVQ appeals procedures is satisfactory. All learners are now issued with a handbook, which has been introduced since the previous inspection. Learners also receive a copy of the company's equal opportunities policy and other supporting booklets. Recently, equal opportunities and health and safety questions have been used during progress reviews. It is too early to judge the effectiveness of these measures.

**Business administration, management & professional****Grade 3**

<b>Programmes inspected</b>	<b>Number of learners</b>	<b>Contributory grade</b>
Work-based learning for young people	21	3

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

**Strengths**

- good achievement of the technical certificate
- very effective target-setting to promote progress
- good support for learners.

**Weaknesses**

- poor completion of the modern apprenticeship framework
- insufficient literacy and numeracy support for some learners

**Achievement and standards**

54. There is good achievement of the technical certificate. At the time of the previous inspection, training to prepare learners for the technical certificate had not been implemented. Each learner is now given a copy of a CD-ROM designed to prepare them for the technical certificate. The information on the CD-ROM is discussed with learners during workplace visits by training staff and further advice and clarification is provided. Since January 2004, 80 per cent of learners entered for the technical certificate tests have been successful.

55. The completion of the modern apprenticeship frameworks is poor, but there is evidence of a significant improvement in learners' progress. In the year 2002-03, only 10 per cent of advanced modern apprentices completed the framework and only six learners from this year are still in learning. Twenty-one per cent of foundation modern apprentices achieved the framework in 2002-03, with five learners still in learning. However, of the 21 learners currently in learning, 17 are making good progress and are on target to complete the framework. Four of these learners are making very good progress and are near to completion.

56. The improvement in retention rates reported at the previous inspection has continued. Seventy-nine per cent of foundation modern apprentices who started training in 2003-04 are still in learning. The two advanced modern apprentices who started training in 2003-04 are also still in learning. The continued improvement in retention rates has been further developed by the introduction of a system designed to monitor learners' progress and to take appropriate actions to remedy concerns.

57. The work produced by learners is satisfactory. Portfolios are well structured and an

appropriate range of evidence is used to demonstrate competence. Learners are aware of the new skills they are developing and the contribution these make to their job roles.

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

58. Targets to promote learners' progress are very clear and appropriate. They are agreed as part of the 12-week progress review process. These targets are used as a basis for the action plans drawn up with learners during visits to the workplace by training staff. Learners fully participate in identifying targets in the context of their job roles and for busy periods in the workplace. There is a strong focus on agreeing targets which can be measured and achieved within a specified period of time. Targets include specified NVQ and key skill units. At progress reviews, the targets are also discussed with workplace supervisors and a written copy is provided for their information. Workplace supervisors offer good advice and very effective support to help learners achieve their targets.

59. There is good support for learners. Training staff who have a very good rapport with learners visit them in the workplace every month, and sometimes more frequently. Assessors' visits to the workplace are welcomed by employers. Visits are used to plan learners' training and to monitor and assess progress towards agreed targets. There is frequent contact between training staff and learners using faxes and e-mails. Learners also receive feedback on completed practise papers for the technical certificate. Where appropriate, training staff respond swiftly to learners' problems in the workplace. For example, one learner was offered a new work placement to improve his progress and confidence. Most employers also contribute time and effort to support learners. Some employers have worked closely and successfully with In-Comm for many years to train learners. Most workplace supervisors are keen to be involved in their learners' programmes. Very often, good advice is offered in support of evidence being gathered and work routines are amended to provide learners with specific experiences needed for the qualification. Many of the supervisors have a good understanding of the NVQ system and can support the learners very effectively. Details of in-house training are made available to In-Comm's staff and used as evidence of learners' competence.

60. Assessment is satisfactory. Assessors carry out regular assessment of learners' progress. Assessment is well planned and methodical and often includes observation of performance in the workplace. Appropriate use is made of questions to test and confirm learners' knowledge and understanding. Assessment is clearly linked to NVQ and key skills units. Clear and constructive written feedback is given to learners and is clearly recorded in the portfolio.

61. Internal verification is satisfactory. There is an appropriate sampling strategy. Verification practice meets the requirements of the joint awarding bodies. Assessors are observed as part of the verification process and written feedback is provided.

62. Resources are satisfactory. Since the previous inspection, good progress has been made to provide learners with information and support for the technical certificate. On

workplace visits, assessors respond to identified needs through the provision of handouts. Work placements provide appropriate work for learners to cover the NVQ requirements. Training staff hold relevant qualifications and have recently updated their assessor qualifications as part of staff development.

63. Support for literacy and numeracy was a weakness at the previous inspection, but while improvements have been made, the support arrangements are not always sufficient. Learners' needs are now routinely identified through initial assessment, and are well recorded on their individual learning plans, but it is not always clear as to how they will be met. Some support for numeracy needs is provided during assessors' visits to learners' workplaces. However, assessors are working towards appropriate learner support qualifications. Currently, they are not always aware of all the proper methodologies for supporting learners. Some learners are also offered literacy and numeracy support through a subcontractor. The management team is aware of the weaknesses in literacy and numeracy support and has strategies to deal with them.

### **Leadership and management**

64. Management has successfully improved many of the areas identified as weaknesses at the previous inspection. For example, a coherent approach has been introduced for meeting the requirements of the technical certificate. Changes in staffing have strengthened the team of assessors and there have been significant improvements in target-setting and monitoring of learners' progress. Good links continue to be maintained and developed with employers through GTAs. Internal communications are effective and staff express that they are well supported by management.