

INSPECTION REPORT

System Group Ltd

14 May 2004



ADULT LEARNING
INSPECTORATE

Grading

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

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

Inspectors use a five-point scale to summarise their judgements about the quality of provision in occupational/curriculum areas 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

System Group Ltd

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INSPECTION REPORT

DESCRIPTION OF THE PROVIDER

1. System Group Ltd (System) is a private limited company based in Carlisle, Cumbria and was established in 1986. It has four training centres, one in central Carlisle, one on the outskirts of Carlisle, one in Workington and one in Maryport. It provides work-based learning for young people in motor vehicle engineering, accountancy and transportation. It also provides commercial training in information and communications technology (ICT), goods vehicle driving, logistics and accountancy, and runs a recruitment agency and a contract cleaning service.
2. System's work-based learning programmes are funded by Cumbria Learning and Skills Council (LSC). The company began offering motor vehicle engineering training very recently, when it took over the programme from a training provider which had ceased to trade. All of System's current motor vehicle learners, and nine members of its staff, transferred from the organisation that closed. System also took over the training centres in Workington and Maryport from that organisation.
3. System has a chief executive and a managing director. The chief executive is responsible for the strategic management of the company and oversees the work-based learning programmes. The managing director concentrates on System's commercial work. The chief executive is supported by an operations director. A work-based learning co-ordinator and a work-based learning administrator carry out day-to-day management. The motor vehicle programmes are overseen by a training centre manager. Twelve tutor-assessors and a basic skills tutor are involved in delivering the work-based learning programmes.
4. According to the 2001 census, the proportion of people from ethnic minorities in Cumbria is just under 1 per cent, compared with 9.1 per cent across England as a whole. The rate of unemployment for 18-24 year olds in April 2004 was 31 per cent in Cumbria, compared with 28 per cent for England as a whole.
5. The System Group is accredited with the Investors in People standard, a national standard for improving an organisation's performance through its people.

SCOPE OF PROVISION

Engineering, technology & manufacturing

6. System has 72 learners on motor vehicle programmes including light vehicle service and repair, vehicle body repair, vehicle refinishing and parts and distribution. The provider has only recently taken over contractual responsibility for this provision at the invitation of the local LSC. Fourteen of the learners are on advanced modern apprenticeships, 45 are on foundation modern apprenticeships and 13 are following national vocational qualifications (NVQs) at level 2 or 3. Twenty-two learners are

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identified as having additional learning needs.

7. Learners are recruited mainly through referrals from the careers service and other specialist referral agencies, although some are recruited through direct contact with local employers. Two members of staff have responsibility for the recruitment of employers and learners. Twenty-five of the learners are employed, and 47 are on placement with local companies ranging from small privately owned garages and specialist tyre and exhaust fitting centres to main dealership franchises.

8. System employs four motor vehicle trainers, three full time and one part time, to deliver training sessions and visit learners in the workplace to carry out progress reviews and assessments. All trainers have relevant industrial experience and appropriate assessor qualifications, but no formal teaching qualifications. Two of the motor vehicle trainers hold internal verifier awards. The standard length of the learners' training programme is between one and four years, depending upon the qualification aim.

Business administration, management & professional

9. Twenty-nine learners are following programmes in accounting and payroll training, 14 on foundation modern apprenticeships and 15 on advanced modern apprenticeships. All learners are employed, and many of them work in accounting practices as accounts clerks. Others work in a range of organisations including construction companies, a vehicle distributor and a hotel. Learners have a planned programme of off-the-job training which takes place at System's training centre. The programmes are delivered by two trainer/assessors, who are both also internal verifiers.

Retailing, customer service & transportation

10. System has 50 learners following programmes in driving goods vehicles, 34 on foundation modern apprenticeships and 16 on advanced modern apprenticeships. The planned programme lengths are 12 months and 24 months respectively. All the learners are employed in local or regional transport-related businesses, and 20 of them are on the young drivers' training scheme. This scheme allows learners under 21 years of age to train for their large goods vehicle (LGV) driving licence. On-the-job training is provided by employers, with some off-the-job training delivered at System's training centre. All assessment is carried out in the workplace by System's staff.

ABOUT THE INSPECTION

Number of inspectors	6
Number of inspection days	24
Number of learner interviews	36
Number of staff interviews	26
Number of employer interviews	16
Number of locations/sites/learning centres visited	17

OVERALL JUDGEMENT

11. The quality of the provision is adequate to meet the reasonable needs of those receiving it. More specifically, System's leadership and management are good. Its arrangements for quality assurance are good, but its approach to equality of opportunity is unsatisfactory. Training is good in retailing, customer service and transportation, and satisfactory in engineering, and business administration, management and professional.

GRADES

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

Leadership and management		2
Contributory grades:		
Equality of opportunity		4
Quality assurance		2

Engineering, technology & manufacturing			3
Contributory areas:	Number of learners	Contributory grade	
<i>Motor vehicle/cycle</i> - Work-based learning for young people	72	3	

Business administration, management & professional			3
Contributory areas:	Number of learners	Contributory grade	
<i>Accounting and economics</i> - Work-based learning for young people	29	3	

Retailing, customer service & transportation			2
Contributory areas:	Number of learners	Contributory grade	
<i>Transportation</i> - Work-based learning for young people	50	2	

KEY FINDINGS

Achievement and standards

12. Engineering learners produce a satisfactory standard of work. Most NVQ and key skills portfolios contain a diverse range of work-based evidence that is clearly indexed and assessed against nationally recognised standards.

13. In business administration, management and professional the first learners were only recruited in August 2003. To date retention has been good, with 29 of the 31 learners recruited still in learning. Most learners are making satisfactory progress so far. For example, one learner has already completed their advanced modern apprenticeship and seven have already completed the first examination administered by a national association of accounting technicians.

14. **Retention and achievement rates are good in retailing, customer service and transportation.** Of the five learners starting foundation modern apprenticeships in 2001-02, three have already completed the full framework and one is still in learning. Learners' rates of achievement of LGV licences for rigid and articulated vehicles are good.

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	0	0	3	0	0	0	3
Business administration, management & professional	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	1
Retailing, customer service & transportation	0	1	3	0	0	0	0	4
Total	0	1	4	3	0	0	0	8

15. Off-the-job training in engineering effectively develops learners' occupational knowledge, as well as providing support for portfolio-building and key skills. The quality of teaching, training and learning which learners receive is satisfactory. All three observed learning sessions were satisfactory. However, learners and employers are not routinely given schemes of work, and on- and off-the-job training are not linked effectively.

16. Although engineering learners' understanding of health and safety is questioned during planned monitoring reviews, System has no established process to check that all placement providers adhere to contractual health and safety requirements.

17. Engineering learners are able to use an extensive range of modern industry-standard equipment to develop their skills. However, some technical resources at System's training centre are not modern and relate to obsolete vehicle technology. Staff are knowledgeable and possess relevant occupational experience. System has invested in the engineering provision since taking it over, for example by appointing a new member

of staff and upgrading ICT equipment.

18. The standard of assessment practice in engineering is satisfactory, although some assessors do not routinely identify gaps in the evidence included in learners' activity records.

19. Engineering learners receive satisfactory initial advice and guidance, and participate in learning programmes that meet their needs. Learners value the frequent contact with System's staff, and have a satisfactory understanding of the individual personal support available to them. Learners receive an initial assessment to identify an additional learning support needs. Learners' literacy and numeracy skills support needs are met satisfactorily, but support for more complex needs, such as for dyslexia, is not provided well.

20. Some employers have insufficient involvement in the review process and do not have a clear understanding of how the learner is progressing towards their qualification aim.

21. Business administration, management and professional accountancy learners receive a well-structured programme at the beginning of the training year, as do the employers. **Off-the-job training is good.** Learning sessions are well planned and supported by good learning materials. All observed learning sessions were graded as good. Learners are encouraged to use workplace experiences as a basis for discussion.

22. Business administration learners have access to some good resources. The new training centre provides spacious accommodation with very good facilities and is accessible to all learners. Staff are very experienced and well qualified. Learners receive an initial assessment to identify any additional learning needs, and receive satisfactory literacy and numeracy support if it is required.

23. **Most business administration learners experience a good level of involvement from their employers.** Some learners have supervisors who have completed programmes themselves and, having been promoted, are acting as mentors to support the learners.

24. The assessment of business administration learners' portfolios is satisfactory. Portfolios are of an acceptable standard with a good level of evidence from the workplace.

25. **Learners do not fully understand the broader aspects of the business administration modern apprenticeship framework.** Many learners are not clear on the requirements of the key skills qualification, and are unsure if they will have to complete the key skills units.

26. Business administration learners have not yet been issued with the employment rights and responsibilities workbook which should be completed during induction. Not all learners receive a thorough workplace induction.

27. **Practical training on the driving goods vehicles modern apprenticeships is very**

good. Instructors are well qualified and experienced in operational driving and instructor roles. The vehicles used for driver training are of a good standard and well maintained. All four learning sessions observed were graded as good or better.

28. System's young driver training scheme successfully meets the needs of learners and employers. The programme helps learners to gain and develop good driving skills, and brings learners into the transport industry as drivers at a young age.

29. Driving goods vehicle learners receive good learning support. Visits by assessors are frequent, and are scheduled flexibly to meet individual learners' needs. Assessors are readily contactable, and always respond promptly to learners' queries or requests for assistance. Assessment practice is satisfactory. Assessment activity is well planned and observations are recorded in detail, and supported by oral questions.

30. Employers are not involved enough in the driving goods vehicle programmes. Some workplace mentors do not have a clear understanding of their learners' qualifications or apprenticeship frameworks.

31. Insufficient emphasis is placed on the driving goods vehicle learners' literacy and numeracy skills. Learners undergo assessment during induction, but the purpose of the tests is not clearly explained to them and many are not informed of their results. Additional support needs are not always identified, and appropriate support is not always provided promptly.

Leadership and management

32. System has effectively managed the transfer of its engineering learners from another training organisation. System has effectively maintained the former provider's procedures and its many good links with local employers for learners' placements, some of which are long-standing.

33. The management of learning in business administration, management and professional accountancy is satisfactory. Continuous improvement is a priority and staff work well as a team, with new staff members being supported by the sharing of good practice with other departments.

34. Staff in retailing, customer service and transportation work effectively as a team. Internal communications are good in each centre. Management of the area of learning is satisfactory.

35. All of System's staff are involved in the self-assessment process. Action plans are produced and worked on. The current self-assessment report identifies some of the strengths and weaknesses found at inspection, although inspectors did identify additional strengths and weaknesses.

36. System has a clear strategic direction, as is fully identified in the self-assessment report. The company's business plan clearly sets out the main objectives for its different

business units, and how the units will support each other.

37. System's business priorities are clearly communicated and are well understood by all staff members. All staff are fully aware of System's challenging business targets for retention and achievement rates, and how they may help the company to achieve these targets. The company has a good staff training and development programme to ensure the required expertise is available to support work-based learning.

38. System has very effective links with external agencies, a strength it partially identified in its self-assessment report. System works effectively with local employers and other organisations, such as national trade and skills associations, to identify the training needs of local companies in related occupational areas. It also uses these links to provide its learners with a good range of modern goods vehicles to train in.

39. System does not provide adequate support for learners with additional learning needs. Some learners who require additional support with their literacy or numeracy skills do not currently have these needs identified until very late in their programmes. System does not adequately plan its delivery of support, which is often inappropriately combined with key skills training.

40. System has a satisfactory equal opportunities policy covering all relevant legislation. Its premises are easily accessible by all and contain modern facilities. The company has not identified the barriers to under-represented groups accessing their learning programmes. It has no plans or strategies in place to increase participation by these groups in its funded training programmes.

41. System has good arrangements for improving training. It has a clearly written quality assurance manual which defines the procedures to be followed at all stages of learners' programmes, from induction to exit. Staff carry out regular programme audits to check the procedures for relevance. The audit process is flexible to allow greater concentration on areas of particular concern. System's procedures for monitoring the overall progress of learners, and identifying learners at risk of leaving early, are effective. Learners not making appropriate progress with their qualifications are also identified.

42. System has had a self-assessment process in place for two years. It completed its most recent report in May 2004. All relevant staff were fully consulted about their views of System's strengths and weaknesses.

43. System's arrangements for internal verification are effective. Internal verifiers are appropriately qualified and learners' work is sampled according to awarding bodies' requirements. Assessors meet regularly to standardise assessment practices. Potential shortcomings in procedures are promptly identified and rectified.

Leadership and management

Strengths

- clear strategic direction
- very effective links with external agencies
- good arrangements for improving training procedures

Weaknesses

- ineffective procedures to provide literacy and numeracy skills support
- incomplete strategies for equality of opportunity

Engineering, technology & manufacturing

Motor vehicle/cycle

Strengths

- good management strategy to support learners
- wide range of suitable learning opportunities

Weaknesses

- no system to check work placement health and safety policies
- insufficient understanding of learners' progress by some employers

Business administration, management & professional

Accounting and economics

Strengths

- good off-the-job training
- good involvement by employers in training
- good resources for learners

Weaknesses

- insufficient emphasis on some framework components
- poor understanding of employment rights and responsibilities

Retailing, customer service & transportation

Transportation

Strengths

- good retention and achievement rates
- good practical training for drivers
- successful young drivers' programme
- good learning support

Weaknesses

- insufficient involvement in training by some employers
- insufficient emphasis on learners' literacy and numeracy skills

WHAT LEARNERS LIKE ABOUT SYSTEM GROUP LTD:

- the small classes - it is easy to ask questions and get help
- being able to work at their own pace and do some more in-depth work if they want to
- the very helpful and approachable tutors
- the well-balanced training - 'I'm getting qualifications but they are supported by really good work experience'
- the flexible approach to training
- the key skills and additional qualifications
- getting out in the wagons
- the well-organised programme - 'I get plenty of support through workplace visits'
- the enjoyable driver training
- that the tutors can deal with a mixed range of learners
- the structured training - 'it's a really good alternative to university'

WHAT LEARNERS THINK SYSTEM GROUP LTD COULD IMPROVE:

- the timing of key skills training
- the speed at which the programmes can be completed
- the amount of advice and guidance offered
- the number of times driving instructors are changed - it's too high
- the amount of day release allowed
- 'nothing, now they have moved to the city centre'

KEY CHALLENGES FOR SYSTEM GROUP LTD:

- maintain current good proportion of learners remaining on programmes
- achieve good framework completion rates
- fully integrate the engineering provision into the company
- complete strategies and procedures to support learners who have additional learning needs
- develop equal opportunities policies strategies to challenge and remove barriers to learning for target groups

DETAILED INSPECTION FINDINGS

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

Grade 2

Strengths

- clear strategic direction
- very effective links with external agencies
- good arrangements for improving training procedures

Weaknesses

- ineffective procedures to provide literacy and numeracy skills support
- incomplete strategies for equality of opportunity

44. System has a clear strategic direction, a strength which it fully identified in its self-assessment report. The company has a succinct business plan that clearly sets out the main objectives for its different business units and how these will support each other. Business priorities are clearly communicated and are well understood by all staff members. Staff are all fully aware of the company's challenging business targets for retention and achievement rates, and how they may help the company to meet these targets. Staff have clear job descriptions and fully understand their own roles, and those of their colleagues.

45. System has taken effective steps to ensure that its workforce possesses the full range of skills required to deliver all aspects of its work-based learning programmes. It has a comprehensive staff learning plan which is closely linked to its business objectives. The plan clearly identifies training for each member of staff, and how this will benefit learners. For example, a key skills tutor who works with transport learners has not worked in the transport industry, but has recently received full commercial driver training from System. An administrator responsible for co-ordinating the work-based learning programmes is being sponsored through an advanced modern apprenticeship in administration. Senior managers have received training in management techniques for motivating staff.

46. System holds regular meetings for staff at all levels, which they use effectively to discuss developments in work-based learning and the overall progress of learners. Staff have used these meetings to plan better ways of providing key skills training and assessment to learners who cannot easily attend training centres. They have also planned the introduction of safety training to prevent transport learners getting penalty points on their car driving licences, which would prevent them from completing their training programmes. Staff have also arranged for additional resources, such as laptop computers and digital cameras, to be provided for learners.

47. System manages changes to its business well and ensures that resources are shared

effectively between the different business activities as they develop. System recently introduced a financial incentive scheme for all staff which is closely related to its overall financial performance and targets for learners' performance. The company managed the takeover of the motor vehicle engineering learners very effectively, causing them minimum disruption. It is already working effectively with the new staff to set targets for the programme and to introduce improvements for learners, such as providing more opportunities for employment as well as work placements.

48. System has very effective links with external agencies. It works well with local employers and external agencies, such as national trade and skills associations, to identify the training needs of local companies in the occupational areas. It has created an employers' forum which meets regularly to discuss developments in relevant business sectors and any resulting changes to their training needs. These needs are then met through developing different training programmes, including work-based learning.

49. System has improved its resources to meet a range of needs. Its off-the-job training centre in Carlisle has been designed for commercial activities and work-based learning. It is modern, comfortable and well equipped, with fully up-to-date ICT facilities and modern training rooms which are well used by learners. System also has very close links with major transportation organisations for which it provides commercial transport and logistics training. It has used these links to provide learners with a good range of modern goods vehicles.

50. System has established good links with several further education colleges, through which it can effectively increase the skills and knowledge of its own staff and improve services for learners. For example, it is already using the expertise from one college with established motor vehicle engineering training to improve the facilities at its new motor vehicle engineering training centre. Working with another college, System has secured joint funding to promote training in accountancy and has developed an effective arrangement for joint observation of learning sessions.

51. System does not provide effective support for learners who have additional learning needs. Some learners with additional literacy or numeracy support needs have not had these needs identified until very late in their learning programmes. Initial assessment does not always take place in a timely and effective manner for all learners. Delivery of support is not adequately planned and is often inappropriately combined with key skills training. System has recently begun to introduce improvements through more effective initial assessment and new arrangements to deliver support through a recently appointed specialist trainer.

Equality of opportunity

Contributory grade 4

52. System has a satisfactory equal opportunities policy which is included in its quality assurance manual and also in the learners' and employers' handbooks. The policy covers all of the required statutes. System also has specific policies to deal with bullying and harassment in the workplace, which again cover all of the relevant statutes.

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53. All staff have received equality of opportunity awareness training. Learners attend an abridged version of this training as part of their two-day induction. This focuses on raising awareness rather than on formal training. The process does not fully ensure that common levels of knowledge and understanding are attained. The training does not sufficiently cover diversity.

54. System has identified that progress reviews were insufficiently focused on equality of opportunity, and has recently introduced a new review document to rectify this. It is too soon to establish the effectiveness of this new document version. Learners are made aware of appeals, complaints and other relevant procedures at induction, and have this information reinforced during their reviews.

55. System has identified that women and members of minority ethnic groups are under-represented on its programmes. It has run specific programmes in the past targeted at these and other groups. These programmes include a course for women who want to become LGV drivers, and courses targeting participants from long-term unemployed groups. Although these courses were well received, System has carried out no follow-up or ongoing analysis to fully assess their effect and no similar programmes or initiatives have been provided for LSC-funded learners.

56. System has no strategies in place to bring about any long-term change in the proportion of under-represented groups participating in its funded programmes. System currently has no control over the selection of its learners, who come onto the programme directly from employers. Targets it has been set for increasing the representation of specific groups on its programmes are inappropriate and unachievable. System does not analyse or identify the perceived barriers to access for these groups. It has no strategies to either reduce or remove these barriers and increase the potential for participation by these groups.

57. System promotes its commitment to equality of opportunity poorly. Its promotional brochures for programmes and courses contain no reference to its commitment or policy in this area, or the fact that System has been recognised by Jobcentre Plus for its good practice in employing people with disabilities. This status commits to meeting guidelines with regard to applications from disabled individuals.

Quality assurance

Contributory grade 2

58. System has good arrangements for improving its training provision. It has a clearly written quality assurance manual which defines the procedures to be followed at all stages of learners' programmes, from induction to exit. These procedures are well controlled and reviewed regularly. Up-to-date versions are held on a central database and are available electronically. System carries out a regular programme of audits to check these procedures for relevance and implementation. The audit procedures themselves are sufficiently flexible to allow greater concentration on areas of particular concern. For example, the most recent self-assessment report identified that challenging targets for learners were not being set during progress reviews. System has now increased the frequency and depth of audits in this area.

59. System collects feedback from learners and employers through regular questionnaires. Return rates are particularly good. The questionnaires are carefully analysed and any adverse comments are discussed promptly with the member of staff concerned. System has effective procedures for monitoring the overall progress of learners and identifying those at risk of leaving early or who are not making appropriate progress with their qualifications. The company makes effective use of data to monitor achievement and retention rates for particular qualifications.

60. System's arrangements for internal verification are effective. Learners' work is sampled according to the awarding bodies' requirements, and internal verifiers have appropriate qualifications and experience. Assessors in most areas of learning hold regular meetings to standardise assessment decisions. Potential shortcomings in procedures are identified quickly and rectified promptly through these meetings. For example, System recently identified that observations in transportation needed to be recorded more thoroughly, and took effective action to introduce improvements.

61. System has carried out self-assessment for the past two years, completing its most recent report in May 2004. All relevant staff were fully consulted on their views of the System Group's strengths and weaknesses. Staff have also been involved in implementing the development plan and are regularly consulted and updated on progress. Overall, the self-assessment report gives an accurate assessment of System's strengths and weaknesses. The motor vehicle engineering training programme commenced too recently to be assessed as thoroughly as the other areas of learning.

AREAS OF LEARNING

Engineering, technology & manufacturing

Engineering, technology & manufacturing		3
Contributory areas:	Number of learners	Contributory grade
<i>Motor vehicle/cycle</i> - Work-based learning for young people	72	3

Motor vehicle/cycle

Strengths

- good management strategy to support learners
- wide range of suitable learning opportunities

Weaknesses

- no system to check work placement health and safety policies
- insufficient understanding of learners' progress by some employers

Achievement and standards

62. Learners produce a satisfactory standard of work. Most NVQ and key skills portfolios contain a diverse range of work-based evidence that is clearly indexed and assessed against nationally recognised standards. However, some learners' evidence is untidy, and tutors' marking does not always provide enough detail to help learners understand how to further improve their work.

63. The provider has only recently taken over contractual responsibility for this provision. No tables are available showing the achievement and retention rates up to the time of inspection.

Quality of education and training

64. All learners attend System's training centre one day each week for off-the-job training. This training focuses on developing learners' occupational knowledge, as well as providing support for portfolio-building and key skills. The quality of training is satisfactory, with the three observed learning sessions all being graded as such. Although learning sessions maintain learners' interest, in some cases the objectives of the session were not always made clear and insufficient account was taken of the needs of individual learners. For example, some handouts were difficult to read and insufficient use was made of targeted questioning to confirm learners' understanding.

65. Learners and employers are not routinely given schemes of work. In many cases, on- and off-the-job training are not effectively linked when the opportunity is present.

66. Learners' understanding of health and safety is checked during planned monitoring reviews. However, System has no established process to assure that all placement providers adhere to contractual health and safety requirements. Its existing procedures do not ensure that health and safety audit findings have been implemented and identified concerns have been dealt with.

67. All placement companies carry out a wide range of motor vehicle servicing and repair activities, providing learners with many suitable learning opportunities on modern motor vehicles. Learners are able to use an extensive range of modern industry-standard equipment in order to develop their engineering skills. However, some technical resources at the training centre are outdated and relate to obsolete vehicle technology. In addition, two of the vehicles used for training purposes at the training centre are poorly maintained and have defective bodywork, which is a safety risk to young learners.

68. Staff are knowledgeable and possess relevant occupational experience. System has invested new funds in the engineering provision since taking it over, with examples including a new staff appointment and upgraded ICT equipment. Learners can now make better use of available electronic learning materials and further develop their information technology skills.

69. The standard of assessment practice is satisfactory, although some assessors are not identifying missing evidence from learners' job cards which record their work activities. Learners are, however, clear as to the standards expected of them.

70. Assessors visit learners in the workplace to review their progress against previously agreed assessment plans and, where appropriate, set new short-term targets. Some employers are not involved enough in this process and do not have a clear understanding of how the learner is progressing towards their qualification aim.

71. System's internal verification arrangements are satisfactory, and are identifying inconsistencies in assessment practice. Initial assessment of learners' level of key skills attainment is satisfactory, and key skill assignments are vocationally specific.

72. Learners receive satisfactory initial advice and guidance and are placed on learning programmes that meet their needs. Before starting on a programme, learners are formally interviewed and their individual interests and career ambitions are identified. All learners receive an initial assessment test which identifies their individual literacy and numeracy skills support needs. Support is provided where appropriate to meet any individual needs identified. However, learners with more complex support needs, such as learners with dyslexia, are not supported well.

73. Learners say they value the frequent contact with System's staff and have a satisfactory understanding of what support is available. If learners report personal difficulties or problems at their work placements, staff take prompt action to resolve these

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concerns quickly. Although learners' understanding of equality of opportunity and health and safety is satisfactory, the monitoring of these aspects, particularly in the workplace, is not thorough enough.

Leadership and management

74. System has managed the transfer of learners from another training provider well, ensuring that learners experienced no disadvantage from the transfer. System took prompt management action to ensure that existing learner registrations were quickly transferred, and that learners awaiting certification or requiring awarding body registration were not unduly delayed. Learners report experiencing little disruption to their programmes during this transition period. System has maintained the existing internal operational and quality assurance procedures, and has been successful in continuing the many good links with local employers for learner placements, some of which are long-standing. A development plan to fully integrate the motor vehicle provision with System's other provision is presently being drafted.

Business administration, management & professional

Business administration, management & professional		3
Contributory areas:	Number of learners	Contributory grade
<i>Accounting and economics</i> - Work-based learning for young people	29	3

Accounting and economics

Strengths

- good off-the-job training
- good involvement by employers in training
- good resources for learners

Weaknesses

- insufficient emphasis on some framework components
- poor understanding of employment rights and responsibilities

Achievement and standards

75. The first learners were recruited onto the programme in August 2003. Of the 31 learners recruited, 29 are still in learning. One learner has already completed the advanced modern apprenticeship and one has left without completing the framework. Most learners are making satisfactory progress so far. For example, seven learners have already completed the first examination administered by a national association of accounting technicians.

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															
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Number of starts	16															
Retained*	0															
Successfully completed	1															
Still in learning	15															

*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															
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Number of starts	15															
Retained*	0															
Successfully completed	0															
Still in learning	14															

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

Quality of education and training

76. System offers a well-developed programme of off-the-job training. A published programme is given to learners and their employers at the beginning of the training year. The learning sessions at the new city centre training department are well structured. Most learners attend the sessions on a monthly basis, with other training days arranged to suit employers' and learners' needs.

77. Learning sessions are well planned and supported by good learning materials. Learners are encouraged to base discussions on their workplace experiences. A small number of learners who are not able to attend the centre receive frequent visits from assessors, who provide the training on an individual basis. Some learners have been fast-tracked onto level 3 work. Learners are able to contact assessors by telephone or e-mail to request additional visits to the workplace. As part of the two-day induction to the programme, learners attend a one-day course covering health and safety and equality and diversity.

78. Off-the-job training is supported by access to some good resources. The new training centre provides spacious accommodation with very good facilities, and is accessible to all learners. System's staff are experienced and well qualified. Both assessors have taught and assessed on this programme for many years, and have extensive knowledge and understanding of the financial aspects of accounting practices and the industry in which learners are employed. All learners are issued with the full set of textbooks and workbooks required for the course. Some employers are able to allocate resources to learners so that they can complete some of their coursework in the workplace.

79. Most learners' employers have a good level of involvement in training. Some learners have supervisors who have completed courses themselves and, having been promoted, are now acting as mentors. Some employers have funded additional courses for their learners, and developed an effective job-rotation system to allow learners to experience and collect evidence of a wide range of roles.

80. The assessment of learners' portfolios is satisfactory. Portfolios are of an acceptable standard with a good level of evidence from the workplace. Formal progress reviews involving the learner and the employer take place every 12 weeks. Until recently, these reviews did not contain clear, measurable targets. The company has introduced a new system to rectify this. Learners' progress is now monitored and targets are set on a monthly basis. Some learners and their employers do not receive a copy of the review document. All learners complete an initial assessment but the results are not recorded on individual learning plans, and it is not clear that the recommendations have been actioned.

81. Learners are not able to discuss the broader aspects of the framework. Many of them do not clearly understand the key skills requirements and are unsure if they have to complete the key skills units. System's staff have identified the key skills covered in the NVQ, but learners have not yet started to identify and cross-reference them or to do the work required, even though they have been on the programme for many months. The learners interviewed were not able to discuss the key skills component of the framework, and were not aware that some of them will need to take key skills tests.

82. The employment rights and responsibilities workbook has been issued and completed late, and learners' awareness of these subjects is poor. The workbook would normally be completed at the induction phase of the programme. Some learners have a thorough workplace induction, but others do not.

83. System has a programme in place to enable learners to complete an NVQ at level 4 and achieve the technician level of a qualification accredited by a national association of accounting technicians as a progression from the modern apprenticeship. The first learner to complete the advanced modern apprenticeship is enrolled on this programme.

Leadership and management

84. System's management of learning is satisfactory. Continuous improvement is a priority for System's staff. New staff are supported by the sharing of good practice with other departments. Meetings are recorded and actions are followed up. Internal verification is satisfactory, with assessors holding regular standardisation meetings. Learners' evaluations are collected and used for planning purposes. The self-assessment report accurately identified some of the strengths and weaknesses identified at inspection. This is a newly developed programme, and little historical data exist to support judgements on retention and achievement rates as yet.

Retailing, customer service & transportation

Retailing, customer service & transportation		2
Contributory areas:	Number of learners	Contributory grade
<i>Transportation</i> - Work-based learning for young people	50	2

Transportation*Strengths*

- good retention and achievement rates
- good practical training for drivers
- successful young drivers' programme
- good learning support

Weaknesses

- insufficient involvement in training by some employers
- insufficient emphasis on learners' literacy and numeracy skills

Achievement and standards

85. Retention and achievement rates are good. Of the five learners starting foundation modern apprenticeships in 2001-02, three have already completed the framework and one is still in learning. Of the 39 learners starting foundation modern apprenticeships between 2002 and 2004, only six have left the programme. Of the 19 learners starting the advanced modern apprenticeships between 2001 and 2003, only three have left so far.

86. Rates of achievement of LGV licences for rigid and articulated vehicles are good. Over the past three years, 97 per cent of learners have achieved a rigid goods vehicle licence, 75 per cent at the first attempt. Similarly, all learners who trained in driving articulated vehicles successfully achieved their licence, 85 per cent at the first attempt.

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)																
	2002-03		2001-02													
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Number of starts	12		7													
Retained*	0		1	14												
Successfully completed	0		1	14												
Still in learning	11		5	71												

*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											
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Number of starts	18		20		5											
Retained*	0		3	15	3	60										
Successfully completed	0		0	0	3	60										
Still in learning	17		16	80	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

Quality of education and training

87. System's practical training of learners for their LGV licences is very good. Instructors are well qualified and experienced in operational driving and instructing. Their style of training delivery and coaching is highly rated by learners. Instructors instil substantial confidence in their learners, and make them feel comfortable driving large vehicles. Observations of training and coaching sessions during inspection confirmed this. Further relevant training and practice is given to learners by employers and mentors at work. Vehicles used for driver training are of a good standard, and are well maintained.

88. System's young driver training scheme is successful in meeting the needs of learners and employers. The programme is well structured and organised, and effectively develops learners' skills. The programme is well resourced, with experienced staff and training vehicles of an appropriate standard. The programme is successful in helping learners to develop good driving skills. It also brings young people into the transport industry in driving roles. One of the learners recently received a special young drivers' award at a formal ceremony in London attended by Government ministers, as he was one of the first to achieve his articulated goods vehicle licence under this training scheme. Another was runner-up in an awards scheme promoting excellence in Cumbria, sponsored by the local LSC as part of its 'Breakthrough' programme for young women

who have successfully entered new occupational fields.

89. Support for learners is good. Assessors make frequent visits to learners, and schedule them flexibly to meet individual learners' needs. Assessors are readily contactable, and respond promptly to learners' queries or requests for assistance. Learners value the supportive approach of System's staff, and the time and effort assessors take to ensure learners' understanding.

90. Learners are supported well by their workplace mentors, who advise and help them to produce evidence and provide them with opportunities for training and practice in driving or other activities, such as loading of vehicles. The Systems Group enhances the training programme by providing some learners with training and access to qualifications in other transport-related activities, such as lift truck driving.

91. System provides a suitable range of vehicles to meet the needs of learners. Staff are suitably qualified and experienced, and vehicles are of recent manufacture, clean and well maintained. Some vehicles are new and contain up-to-date technology. Training accommodation is of a good standard, with ground-floor access where appropriate.

92. System's assessment practice is satisfactory. Assessment activity is well planned. Observations are recorded in detail, and accompanied by oral questions. However, the range of portfolio evidence, in some cases, is narrow.

93. System's internal verification practices are satisfactory. Its strategy document includes all the necessary key verification processes. Clear sampling and assessor observation plans are in place. The company keeps full and accurate records of individual and overall sampling and observations. A clear audit trail of all internal verification exists. Sampling is effective. The company has an accurate checking system to ensure that actions set by the internal verifier are completed to agreed timescales.

94. Learners receive a satisfactory induction to their programme. They attend a two-day induction course at the centre. They are given an induction pack which contains some good-quality material to help their understanding of equality of opportunity. Some employers provide learners with an additional induction to the workplace.

95. Progress reviews are satisfactory. They take place at regular intervals with interim reviews carried out on a monthly basis. Some brief reinforcing of health and safety and equality of opportunity is included as part of the review process, but some records of reviews are incomplete.

96. Employers are insufficiently involved in learners' programmes. Some workplace mentors do not have a clear understanding of learners' qualifications and apprenticeship frameworks. Most employers do not have formal training plans. Few companies have qualified work-based assessors. Some employers do not have copies of qualification standards, and many employers are unaware of the employers' guide content. The workplace supervisor is not always present and is not involved in any target-setting or plan agreed with the learner.

97. System places insufficient emphasis on learners' literacy and numeracy skills levels. Learners take assessment tests during induction, but the purpose of these tests is not clearly explained to them and many learners are not informed of their results. Additional support needs are not always identified and appropriate support is not always provided promptly. Some members of staff are not sufficiently clear about which assessment tool should be used to assess literacy, numeracy and key skills abilities.

Leadership and management

98. System's management of the driver training programmes is good. Staff work effectively as a team. Internal communications are good in each centre. Staff formally and informally share information on learners' progress and problems. Staff are well qualified, trained and experienced. They are encouraged to develop their skills, both occupationally and as tutors.

99. All staff are involved in the self-assessment process. Action plans are produced and worked on. The current self-assessment report identifies some of the strengths and weaknesses found at inspection, although inspectors did identify additional strengths and weaknesses. The report describes the organisation and its staffing structure well. System has effective procedures for monitoring the quality of driver training.