

INSPECTION REPORT

SMART Training and Recruitment Limited

16 September 2004



ADULT LEARNING
INSPECTORATE

Grading

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

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

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

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

The two grading scales relate to each other as follows:

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

Adult Learning Inspectorate

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

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

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

Overall judgement

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

Provision will normally be deemed to be inadequate where:

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

This provision will be subject to a full reinspection.

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

INSPECTION REPORT

SMART Training and Recruitment Limited

Contents

Summary

Description of the provider	1
Scope of provision	1
About the inspection	2
Overall judgement	2
Grades	2
Key findings	3
What learners like about SMART Training and Recruitment Limited	7
What learners think SMART Training and Recruitment Limited could improve	7
Key challenges for SMART Training and Recruitment Limited	8

Detailed inspection findings

Leadership and management	9
Equality of opportunity	10
Quality assurance	11
Retailing, customer service & transportation	13
Hospitality, sport, leisure & travel	18

INSPECTION REPORT

DESCRIPTION OF THE PROVIDER

1. SMART Training and Recruitment Limited (SMART Training) is located in Newport, Isle of Wight and came into being in June 2004. It is the rebranded name of the School of Food and Wine Limited, which was established in February 2003 after a buy-out of the Isle of Wight School of Food and Wine. The scope of the inspection starts with the February 2003 buy-out.
2. SMART Training contracts with Hampshire and the Isle of Wight Learning Skills Council (LSC) to provide modern apprenticeship programmes in customer service and hospitality. Some short training courses are provided commercially, to individuals who pay the full cost of the programme. The company is accredited by national awarding bodies to provide key skills and national vocational qualifications (NVQs); health and safety; and food hygiene qualifications, and innkeeping licence and supervisor courses.
3. SMART Training employs 10 full-time staff: five training assessors, two business development officers, one of whom is a learner, and three administrators, two of whom are learners.

SCOPE OF PROVISION

Retailing, customer service & transportation

4. Twenty-two learners are following customer service programmes, eight as advanced modern apprentices and 14 as foundation modern apprentices. The customer service programme started in September 2003. Off-the-job training in key skills takes place at the company's Newport training centre each week, and training for customer service technical certificates has very recently begun. Smart Training works with 20 employers across a variety of occupational areas, including hotels, bistros, retailers, public houses and offices. All learners receive an initial assessment and induction. One training adviser has responsibility for visiting and assessing the learners in the workplace. Reviews of learners' progress are completed at every workplace visit and during off-the-job training.

Hospitality, sport, leisure & travel

5. SMART Training has 99 learners on hospitality programmes: 58 as foundation modern apprentices and 41 as advanced modern apprentices. Learners are working towards qualifications in food preparation and cooking, food and drink service, housekeeping, bar service and hospitality services at levels 2 and 3, and hospitality supervision at level 3. Most learners are in employment. Thirty-three learners have been identified as having additional learning needs and three of these learners have been identified as having additional social needs. Four learners speak English as an additional language. There are four hospitality training advisers and one internal verifier. The training adviser/assessors visit learners in the workplace every two to four weeks to assess their work and review their progress. Learners work independently to complete their background knowledge questions, and some attend the training centre one day each week for key skills training. Technical certificate training takes place at the training centre. Some food preparation and cooking learners attend training and assessment sessions held at two catering establishments in other parts of the island. SMART Training works with 63 hospitality employers. Learners work in a wide range of establishments, including country house hotels, coaching and touring hotels, mid-range restaurants and cafes, restaurants serving luxury cuisine and public houses.

ABOUT THE INSPECTION

Number of inspectors	5
Number of inspection days	20
Number of learner interviews	52
Number of staff interviews	18
Number of employer interviews	21
Number of locations/sites/learning centres visited	26

OVERALL JUDGEMENT

6. The quality of provision is adequate to meet the reasonable needs of those receiving it. SMART Training's leadership and management are satisfactory. The company's arrangements for quality assurance are unsatisfactory, but its approach to equality of opportunity is good. Training in retailing, customer services and transportation, and hospitality, sport, leisure and travel are satisfactory.

GRADES

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

Leadership and management	3
Contributory grades:	
Equality of opportunity	2
Quality assurance	4

Retailing, customer service & transportation		3
Contributory areas:	Number of learners	Contributory grade
Customer service - Work-based learning for young people	22	3

Hospitality, sport, leisure & travel		3
Contributory areas:	Number of learners	Contributory grade
Hospitality and catering - Work-based learning for young people	99	3

KEY FINDINGS

Achievement and standards

7. **Hospitality learners develop good skills and progress well from foundation to advanced modern apprenticeships.** Learners develop good skills in the workplace. Some learners have been promoted while on programme. Of the 14 learners who have completed their foundation modern apprenticeship since 2002-03, 13 have progressed to advanced modern apprenticeships. SMART Training provides a good range of advanced hospitality courses for learners to develop their skills.

8. The customer service programmes have not been running long enough to make judgements on achievement and retention rates. However, no learners have left the programmes early so far, and two of the 22 starters since 2002-03 have completed the framework. Learners develop effective personal skills and produce work to an appropriate standard.

Quality of education and training

9. **Customer service learners have good-quality workplaces** and are well matched to their placements. Employers are supportive of learners' training needs and provide good supervision and on-the-job training. Learners make good progress in skills development, take on additional responsibilities and demonstrate positive attitudes.

10. **All learners receive good individual personal support.** The working arrangements and respect between staff and learners are very good, both in the workplace and at off-the-job training. SMART Training's staff support and care for learners well during times of personal problems and help them to take responsibility and make informed decisions. Learners have good access to the training advisers. Learners who attend the training centre receive good support with their key skills qualifications and are aware of the

SMART TRAINING AND RECRUITMENT LIMITED

progress they are making in numeracy and spelling. Learners can visit the training centre for support from staff even when not scheduled, and they report that the support they are given increases their confidence and motivation.

11. Initial assessment is not used effectively for customer service learners. Results from initial assessment do not contribute to individual learning plans, and no clear plan exists of how learners with identified additional learning or social needs will receive support. Some learners' jobs may not provide evidence to meet all of the criteria of the NVQ, but SMART Training has no plan for arranging training and identifying evidence to help ensure learners complete their qualification successfully.

12. Hospitality learners with identified needs receive inadequate literacy and numeracy skills support, and those who speak English as an additional language receive inadequate language support. All learners complete an initial assessment which identifies their current literacy, numeracy and language skills level. SMART Training offers some informal support but no formal support.

13. Customer service learners do not receive enough assessment. Assessment staff do not fully understand the NVQ standards, evidence requirements and assessment methods. Insufficient support has been provided to the assessors and internal verification has not adequately identified or rectified the problems. Assessment is carried out unit by unit and learners are making slow progress towards NVQ completion. Very little assessment of key skills has taken place so far, but some improvements have been made in relating work-based projects to key skills assignments and NVQ evidence.

Leadership and management

14. SMART Training's leadership and management of change are strong. The company has experienced many recent changes and improvements and management have led these changes well. SMART Training has clear strategic aims and its staff are fully involved and supported throughout. It carries out comprehensive target-setting to bring about improvements in training. Learners and employers have commented very positively about the changes being made.

15. SMART Training's management of resources is good. The company recently moved to a good-quality training centre that offers well-decorated training and interview rooms and information technology (IT) facilities. Unqualified and inexperienced staff are supported well in gaining appropriate qualifications. Staff are managed well and are given regular opportunities to share best practice. Staff are set clear targets, and learners' NVQ unit achievement rates have improved significantly. Employers' commercial premises are used to meet some learners' additional vocational training needs.

16. SMART Training promotes equality of opportunity and diversity well. The company makes sure that learners and employers have good, accessible information, and gives them good support and guidance to further their understanding and help them develop professional relationships. SMART Training acts quickly and decisively to resolve concerns raised by learners.

17. **SMART Training carries out insufficient planning and co-ordination of training for hospitality learners.** Learners receive good learning opportunities in a wide range of establishments. Retention rates are satisfactory and achievement rates for NVQ units have improved significantly. However, training and assessment are often informal and coincidental to learning. The company's planning of individual programmes does not clearly take account of learners' prior experience, current work or skill acquisition. Work-based assessors and training centre staff do not sufficiently co-ordinate their activities. Insufficient planning of off-the-job training takes place for learners who do not attend the training centre.

18. SMART Training's recently introduced quality assurance procedures are satisfactory, but its implementation of quality assurance arrangements is incomplete. Some key aspects of learners' training are not properly monitored to ensure continuous improvement. The company has no procedure to ensure employers fulfil their contracts with it.

19. **The company's management of literacy and numeracy skills support, and language support for speakers of English as an additional language, is ineffective.** Strategies and procedures for additional support have not been properly developed. Learners with identified needs receive no formal support.

20. SMART Training has satisfactory internal verification procedures. It has arrangements in place to observe assessments and examine learners' portfolios. The company has identified that it has insufficient internal verifiers, and a member of staff is currently working towards the appropriate qualification.

21. SMART Training's self-assessment and development planning are satisfactory. It uses a range of methods to collect the views of learners and employers, and includes staff fully in the process. The self-assessment report is not self-critical enough and identifies some, but not all, of the strengths and weaknesses identified at inspection.

Leadership and management

Strengths

- strong leadership and management of change
- good management of resources
- good promotion of equality of opportunity and diversity

Weaknesses

- incomplete implementation of quality assurance arrangements
- inadequate management to ensure literacy, numeracy and language support

Retailing, customer service & transportation

Customer service

Strengths

- good individual learning and pastoral support
- good-quality workplaces

Weaknesses

- ineffective use of initial assessment
- insufficient assessment

Hospitality, sport, leisure & travel

Hospitality and catering

Strengths

- good skills development and progression from foundation to advanced modern apprenticeships
- good personal support for learners

Weaknesses

- insufficient planning and co-ordination of training
- inadequate literacy, numeracy and language support for learners with identified needs

WHAT LEARNERS LIKE ABOUT SMART TRAINING AND RECRUITMENT LIMITED:

- the support from training advisers
- the flexibility of training and gaining a recognised qualification
- being treated like an adult and expected to take responsibility
- access to the training centre
- being involved at work and training
- the centre - it has a nice atmosphere and is a good place to relax
- that you are found good workplaces
- the preparation to do higher-level training

WHAT LEARNERS THINK SMART TRAINING AND RECRUITMENT LIMITED COULD IMPROVE:

- the amount of course information provided
- the amount of notice given of when training courses are running
- the location of the training centre
- the amount of support given by employers
- the key skills training - make it more interesting and include wider skills

KEY CHALLENGES FOR SMART TRAINING AND RECRUITMENT LIMITED:

- improve the effectiveness of initial assessment
- improve support in literacy and numeracy, and in language for speakers of English as an additional language
- improve planning and assessment of training
- fully implement the quality assurance arrangements

DETAILED INSPECTION FINDINGS

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

Grade 3

Strengths

- strong leadership and management of change
- good management of resources
- good promotion of equality of opportunity and diversity

Weaknesses

- incomplete implementation of quality assurance arrangements
- inadequate management to ensure literacy, numeracy and language support

22. The company is led well and many recent improvements have been made. Directors have created an ethos that is purposeful and which focuses on the wellbeing and achievement of the learner. Regular board meetings provide an effective overview of the current position of the company, and monitor progress against key performance indicators. Learners are at the centre of this process. Financial control is good. SMART Training's strategic objectives reflect its future vision and values and support it to fulfil its mission. Staff are fully involved in strategic planning and clearly understand their role in its implementation. SMART Training has a target-setting culture. Targets are set for rates of retention, achievement and progression. Progress towards meeting these targets is regularly reviewed and staff are set realistic targets through appraisal and monthly review meetings. The company has introduced a comprehensive management information system and uses it effectively to monitor performance against its business plan. Learners and employers have commented very positively about the recent changes made by the new management.

23. SMART Training's management of resources is good. It has moved to a good-quality, high-street training centre with a range of well-decorated training and interview rooms and increased accessibility. The company is able to deliver off-the-job training for technical certificates, key skills qualifications and some computerised vocational background knowledge. Recent use of employers' premises has provided learners with additional opportunities to practise and gain skills and gain feedback from customers. SMART Training has managed resources very effectively for staff to gain appropriate qualifications to meet their evolving roles. Staff have been allocated time in the working week to enable them to fulfil the requirements set by awarding bodies. The ratio of assessors to learners is good. Staff are managed well and are given regular opportunities to share best practice. Training advisers have recently been set clear targets for retention and achievement rates, and NVQ-unit achievement has been improving. SMART Training has made good use of funding bids to support the development of an ICT suite and specific software for learners with weak literacy skills.

SMART TRAINING AND RECRUITMENT LIMITED

24. SMART Training's communication is satisfactory. As identified in its self-assessment report, the company has responded swiftly to concerns about communication raised by staff. A range of meetings with clear minutes and action points has been put in place and monthly meetings for individual staff members have been organised. Quarterly away days enable staff to share ideas and discuss the implementation of revised procedures. The development of a newsletter, distributed widely across the island, effectively communicates information about SMART Training, including the achievements of staff and students. The company's re-branding has effectively communicated its new image. SMART Training's website effectively provides support and guidance for employers and learners. A system on the intranet ensures that all staff use the most recent guidance and forms developed by the company. SMART Training's staff attend a range of external meetings and keep regular contact with external partners. They consider that communication has improved since SMART Training was formed.

25. SMART Training's new procedures for recruitment, selection, induction, appraisal and staff development are satisfactory. These procedures are still being fully implemented and the systems for monitoring their effectiveness are not yet in place. Satisfactory formal agreements for subcontractors' roles and responsibilities are in place.

26. The company's management of literacy and numeracy skills support, and of language support for learners who speak English as an additional language, is inadequate. It has no overall strategy or procedures to provide additional support. When learners are identified with additional learning needs, SMART Training has no structure to ensure these needs are met or to evaluate the effectiveness of support. The company was unaware that most learners with additional learning needs are not attending the centre and are receiving no literacy, numeracy or language skills support.

Equality of opportunity

Contributory grade 2

27. SMART Training promotes equality of opportunity and diversity well. The company is positive about being a training provider that encourages all learners. It has implemented detailed policies. Learners and employers are issued with good handbooks that clearly state procedures, give information on related laws and which provide details of organisations for further advice and guidance. All learners are required to complete the equality, rights and responsibilities course to further develop their understanding and complete their framework. SMART Training has extended this programme to involve employers by requiring them to sign off the coursework as completed before certification. It has developed a website that includes good and comprehensive information on equality and diversity for learners and employers and offers web links to a range of organisations and agencies offering further advice and guidance. This is particularly useful and forms part of SMART Training's ethos to promote good training and working practices. The company's newsletter is issued to all stakeholders and emphasises commitment to the promotion of equality and diversity for all. Employers are given support in understanding related legal and training requirements without cost where there is need. All new employers interested in being involved in the training process are vetted before being accepted to take learners. However, SMART Training has an inadequate system to monitor employers' ongoing approach towards equality and

diversity at work.

28. SMART Training responds quickly to resolve concerns raised by learners with regard to unfair treatment either at work or home. It takes positive steps to mediate, inform and support learners, employers and other parties involved. In instances where a learner has been removed from a placement, SMART Training's staff have continued to offer guidance in order to promote a better understanding of equality and diversity, even though the relationship between the employer and training provider has ceased. In another case one learner reported being harassed and bullied at work. A member of SMART Training's staff made clear to the employer the requirements of the training agreement signed by the employer and the relevant aspects of the law. As a result the employer invited a specialist outside agency to offer staff advice and guidance and reported back to SMART Training that the actions had been taken and the matter resolved. The learner continued training without any adverse repercussions or further distress.

29. Staff have been trained to embrace diversity and share best practice. During learners' progress reviews, some training assessors are developing greater understanding and reinforcement of equality and diversity by targeting specific subjects for discussion. Group trainers actively involve all learners and take account of differences in ability and individual learners' needs.

30. In June 2004 SMART Training moved into new premises. At the time of the inspection the company had made all the necessary changes in building and equipment requirements as stated in the July 2004 development plan to improve access to learners with restricted mobility and assist learners with impaired sight and hearing. These changes included installing a ground-floor lavatory for people in wheelchairs, Braille signage and a hearing 'loop' facility, and introducing large text and audio-taped services.

31. SMART Training collects appropriate data about the gender and ethnicity of learners and carries out some analysis of the data. For example, the company is aware of an imbalance in the recruitment of women onto food preparation and cooking programmes and has been active to raise the profile of the vocation to attract more women. However, it does not use the data collected to determine the performance of groups of learners, such as learners who speak English as an additional language or those with additional learning needs.

Quality assurance

Contributory grade 4

32. SMART Training's recently introduced quality assurance policy and procedures are satisfactory. The quality assurance system effectively includes all aspects of training such as recruitment, induction and on- and-off-the-job training. As identified in the self-assessment report, documents are clear and provide staff with sufficient information to follow the company's procedures correctly. Staff are knowledgeable about the newly implemented procedures and find them helpful in their role. However, procedures do not include guidance for staff to work to the standard required by the company. For example, the procedures list what to include in a review but not how to complete each

SMART TRAINING AND RECRUITMENT LIMITED

aspect to a high standard. The effectiveness of quality assurance procedures are checked by rigorous audits of learners' files. Specific areas which require improvement, such as the setting of specific, measurable, achievable, realistic and time-related targets or correct completion of individual learning plans, are highlighted. These form the agenda for individual staff members' monthly meetings with a director. Generic areas for improvement are discussed and appropriate training is provided at weekly team meetings.

33. SMART Training's implementation of its quality assurance arrangements is incomplete. As identified in the self-assessment report, the company does not monitor the co-ordination and effectiveness of on- and off-the-job training to ensure that training meets learners' individual learning needs. Staff, including subcontractors, are observed infrequently in key aspects of learners' training and the outcomes of observation do not link formally with overall arrangements for continuous improvement. SMART Training has no procedures covering regular risk assessment, absence and disciplinary procedures, communication arrangements, and health and safety, to ensure that employers fulfil their contracts. In one case a learner was taken to hospital with a serious knife wound and the employer did not inform the training provider.

34. SMART Training is implementing a cycle for gaining feedback from learners, employers and subcontractors. However, this is not sufficiently established to provide the company with an overall view of the provision and help it to make changes. Learners' evaluations of their off-the-job training are insufficiently analysed and too few changes are made to the programme as a result. The data collated by the management information system is used intensively to monitor the performance of individual staff and learners. There is insufficient use of this information to analyse and make improvements across the provision.

35. SMART Training's procedures for internal verification are satisfactory. Arrangements for sampling assessments are in place and include observations of assessments and the examination of learners' portfolios. Records of internal verification are maintained satisfactorily. The verifier has appropriate qualifications and experience, but there are insufficient internal verifiers for the numbers of learners. The company has recognised this and a member of staff is currently working towards the appropriate qualification.

36. SMART Training's self-assessment and development planning are satisfactory. A range of feedback and satisfaction surveys from learners and employers effectively contribute to the self-assessment. Staff are fully included in self-assessment and subsequent development planning. The self-assessment report focuses on responses from key stakeholders rather than the company's self-evaluation, and is insufficiently critical. Some, but not all, of the key strengths and weaknesses of the provision are identified.

AREAS OF LEARNING

Retailing, customer service & transportation

Retailing, customer service & transportation		3
Contributory areas:	Number of learners	Contributory grade
Customer service - Work-based learning for young people	22	3

Customer service

Strengths

- good individual learning and pastoral support
- good-quality workplaces

Weaknesses

- ineffective use of initial assessment
- insufficient assessment

Achievement and standards

37. Of the two learners who began foundation modern apprenticeships in 2002-03, one has completed the framework and one is still in learning. Eight learners started advanced modern apprenticeships in 2003-04 and all are still on programme. Thirteen of the 14 learners who started foundation modern apprenticeships in the same year are still on programme and one has successfully completed. There have been no early leavers. The programmes have not been running long enough to make a judgement regarding retention and achievement rates.

38. Learners are making satisfactory progress in collecting evidence of competence, but some are making slow progress towards achieving NVQ units and key skills qualifications. Learners are developing effective personal skills and producing appropriate standards of work, both in relation to their qualification and in the workplace.

SMART TRAINING AND RECRUITMENT LIMITED

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

LSC funded work-based learning																
Advanced apprenticeships																
	2003-04															
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Number of starts	8															
Retained*	0															
Successfully completed	0															
Still in learning	8															

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

LSC funded work-based learning																
Apprenticeships																
	2003-04		2002-03													
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Number of starts	14		2													
Retained*	1		1													
Successfully completed	1		1													
Still in learning	13		1													

*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

39. Training is satisfactory. Most learners attend weekly off-the-job training in key skills where they receive individual tuition and support, including the use of practise papers to help them prepare for exams. Courses to cover the customer service technical certificate have recently been introduced. There is no clear co-ordination between off-the-job training and on-the-job training that is provided by employers.

40. Learners' workplaces are good quality. SMART Training is careful to match the learner to an appropriate employer, ensuring that the learner will be suited to the particular working environment and be in a job which meets their career expectations. Employers are supportive of the learners and provide good supervision and on-the-job training to meet the job requirements. Employers treat learners the same as other employees and encourage them to progress. Employers confirm that learners are progressing well in the workplace, taking on additional responsibilities and demonstrating a positive attitude. Employers allow the learners to attend off-the-job training in work time. One employer has demonstrated its commitment by allowing learners from other workplaces to receive training on its premises. Promotion is linked to training and improved performance by learners at work. SMART Training, in its capacity as an employer, is supporting a learner to take a university diploma. Employers are keen to

give learners challenging projects which will benefit the workplace as well as the learners' qualifications. When one learner suffered some harassment at work the employer, in conjunction with SMART training, was very supportive in resolving the problem. The employer arranged for an external consultant to speak to its employees about the matter to ensure everyone understood the implications of such behaviour.

41. SMART Training's physical resources for off-the-job training are satisfactory. The training centre offers a range of clean and well-decorated training and interview rooms. SMART Training provides sufficient computers to meet the needs of learners, although on some occasions there are not enough for the number of learners attending. The company has developed teaching and learning support materials for the technical certificate courses which are sufficient to support the development of skills and knowledge at foundation level. However, lesson plans for advanced level are still to be developed.

42. Progress reviews are satisfactory. Records are completed at every visit and progress and targets are recorded clearly. One employer conducts three-way reviews while most employers hold brief meetings with the training adviser to discuss learners' progress and concerns. Monitoring records are also completed for off-the-job training to record progress in learning.

43. Initial assessment is ineffective. All learners complete an initial assessment of their literacy, numeracy and language skills, and most complete a key skills assessment. Where additional learning or social needs are identified these are recorded on the individual learning plan. However, SMART Training has no clear and effective follow-up action plan to ensure individual needs are met. Some learners' files record aspects of support they have received, such as specific training in fractions or percentages, but several learners' files have no such records. SMART Training has no formal, documented process to show how the learner's job will meet the requirements of the NVQ. Some learners are employed in jobs which will make it difficult to meet all the criteria of the NVQ, but SMART Training has no plan of how training will be arranged and evidence identified to help ensure successful completion of the qualification. Learners complete learning style and work style questionnaires at initial assessment but, although the results are recorded, they are not used to develop the individual learning plan.

44. SMART Training does not carry out enough assessment. Assessment staff are recently and appropriately qualified but do not fully understand the NVQ standards, evidence requirements or assessment methods. They have received insufficient support and internal verification has not adequately identified and dealt with these concerns. A unit-by-unit approach is taken for assessment, and learners have made slow progress in achievement. In some cases, learners are collecting good quantities of evidence in their portfolios but this is not being assessed as it is collected or cross-referenced over different units. Some learners' portfolio evidence is not clear in its relevance and requires further explanation. Learners are not always encouraged to produce personal statements to support competence. In a few cases the assessor has signed off units even though the evidence is insufficient to meet the standards. There has been very little assessment of key skills to date. Some signs of improvements are apparent, however, with learners

SMART TRAINING AND RECRUITMENT LIMITED

being encouraged to complete useful work-related projects for their key skills and use the evidence for their NVQ as well. Other aspects of assessment, such as recording of observations and giving feedback to learners, are satisfactory. Portfolios are well presented.

45. SMART Training's programmes and courses meet the needs of its learners and their employers. All learners interviewed are happy to be taking customer service awards regardless of their occupational area. SMART Training has plans to offer retailing programmes as an alternative for learners working in shops.

46. Learners receive good individual support. Working arrangements and respect between staff and learners are very good both in the workplace and at off-the-job training. The training adviser visits regularly and more often than scheduled where requested, to support learners in their qualification and in their work environment. Learners are also able to contact their training adviser or other centre staff easily at any time. Learners who attend key skills training say they value the support of their tutor, and confirm that their skills in aspects such as numeracy and spelling have improved through attendance. One learner is being supported to achieve a key skills qualification at level 3 to meet their longer-term objectives, although this is not required for their qualification. Another learner was allowed to continue attending the centre for portfolio support during the peak holiday season, even though off-the-job training classes had ceased. When one learner was affected by harassment in the workplace, the training adviser took swift and successful action to resolve the problem. Learners have a positive attitude towards SMART Training's staff and feel able to approach them at any time to discuss any problems. Learners are increasing in confidence and motivation through the support they receive. No learners have left the programme early. Induction is satisfactory. All learners attend a formal induction into their programme which includes reference to the NVQ, health and safety, and equality and diversity training. They receive a learners' handbook covering SMART Training's policies and procedures. Checklists are completed to ensure both workplace and programme inductions have taken place.

Leadership and management

47. Staff training and development are satisfactory overall. The training adviser has recently achieved an assessor award and group training certificate. However, they have received insufficient support in their role as assessor. The training adviser demonstrates a good commitment to the role, and has developed good relationships with learners and employers. Their further training and development objectives have recently been set and recorded on their continual professional development plan following a review with their line manager. These include an intermediate food hygiene award and a key skills qualification at level 3. Staff meetings are held monthly to monitor performance and discuss any concerns.

48. SMART Training's internal verification is satisfactory. It has recently updated its systems and procedures and keeps clear records to monitor learners' progress. The assessor has been observed and some learners were interviewed in accordance with internal verification procedures. However, internal verifier feedback records do not

sufficiently identify actions and development needs to help the assessor improve their practice, particularly considering their inexperience of the role of assessment and of the NVQ and key skills standards.

49. Learners have a reasonable understanding of equality of opportunity. The subject is covered at induction, and in the employer rights and responsibilities workbook which learners have to complete as part of their framework. Questions to check learners' understanding of equality and diversity are asked at progress reviews. Learners are working in environments where they feel protected and receive a swift and effective response whenever they feel they are being unfairly treated. The self-assessment report does not adequately reflect the weaknesses in the area identified in the inspection.

Hospitality, sport, leisure & travel

Hospitality, sport, leisure & travel		3
Contributory areas:	Number of learners	Contributory grade
<i>Hospitality and catering</i> - Work-based learning for young people	99	3

Hospitality and catering

Strengths

- good skills development and progression from foundation to advanced modern apprenticeships
- good personal support for learners

Weaknesses

- insufficient planning and co-ordination of training
- inadequate literacy, numeracy and language support for learners with identified needs

Achievement and standards

50. Learners develop their skills and progress well from foundation to advanced modern apprenticeships. Learners develop good skills in the workplace. Some learners have been promoted while on programme and have responsibility for running shifts, compiling menus and planning rotas. Learners are given increased responsibility and often show initiative at work. Fourteen of the 87 learners who started foundation modern apprenticeships since 2002-03 have completed the framework, and 13 of these learners have progressed to advanced modern apprenticeships. SMART Training offers a wide range of advanced programmes which provide learners either with broader knowledge and skill acquisition or a more focused specialism, for example kitchen larder food preparation and cooking or hospitality supervision.

51. Retention rates are satisfactory. Hospitality programmes have not been operating long enough for a judgement on framework completion rates to be made. Of the 21 learners who started a foundation modern apprenticeship framework in 2002-03, seven have completed the framework and six learners are still on programme. Four learners started advanced modern apprenticeships in the same year, three of whom are still in learning. Seven of the 66 learners who started a foundation modern apprenticeship framework in 2003-04 have completed the framework and 52 are still in learning. Of the 40 learners who started an advanced modern apprenticeship in the same year, 38 are still in learning.

52. Learners in housekeeping, food and drink service, bar service, hospitality services and hospitality supervision are making satisfactory progress towards achieving their NVQ units. The number of NVQ units being achieved has significantly improved recently. In March 2004 a total of 18 units were achieved by hospitality learners; in June and July 62

and 72 units respectively were achieved. Three learners are working towards completing their framework beyond the agreed time allocated. The quality of learners' key skills work has recently improved and is now good.

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

LSC funded work-based learning																	
Advanced apprenticeships	2003-04		2002-03														
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	
	Number of starts	40		4													
Retained*	0		0														
Successfully completed	0		0														
Still in learning	38		3														

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

LSC funded work-based learning																	
Apprenticeships	2003-04		2002-03														
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	
	Number of starts	66		21													
Retained*	7		7														
Successfully completed	7		7														
Still in learning	52		6														

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

Quality of education and training

53. SMART Training ensures learners are in employment that will enable them to cover the full range of their qualification requirements. Its learners receive good learning opportunities in a wide range of establishments. Off-the-job vocational and key skills training is good. Learners receive structured individual key skills training and are able to work at a pace that best suits them. However, a third of learners do not attend the training centre and provision for these learners is poor. SMART Training recently started to use two off-site commercial restaurants to enable learners to train and develop their competences in areas in which they may not previously have had sufficient opportunities.

54. Resources are satisfactory. Training advisers and assessors have appropriate vocational and assessment qualifications and industrial experience, and have recently supported much improvement in learners' NVQ unit achievement rates. The ratio of training assessors to learners, who visit learners in workplace once every two to three

SMART TRAINING AND RECRUITMENT LIMITED

weeks, is good. Training assessors are working towards key skills qualifications at level 3, but no member of staff is qualified to support learners with additional learning needs. Recent staff development is valued by staff and has improved the level of support and guidance to learners. Learners who attend the training centre have access to good-quality accommodation and computers with broadband internet connectivity. The learning centre library contains a range of reference books and videos, but some of these are not relevant to current standards. No supplementary materials are available to support learners' development of background knowledge. Learning resources for learners who do not attend the training centre and who have additional learning needs are poor. Most work placements are good.

55. SMART Training's NVQ assessment is satisfactory and its key skills assessment is good. Learners are frequently visited by training advisers, their progress is reviewed and observations or assessments are planned and agreed. However, learners do not have a detailed assessment schedule to work towards. Assessment is not always used to inform learners of how they are progressing and is not always linked to the learners' current work. For example, one learner prepares hot desserts in a busy hotel, but is having to concentrate on completion of vegetable preparation to gain evidence for their qualification. Insufficient use is made of cross-referencing observation evidence across a range of criteria. However, many learners are being assessed more frequently of late and are more positive about their NVQ completion. Internal verification is satisfactory. All learners complete an initial assessment which identifies their current literacy, numeracy and language skills level, but the assessment results are not used to develop the individual learning plan.

56. SMART Training offers a good range of advanced qualifications, including in drink service advanced craft, hospitality supervision, food preparation and general cooking, larder and patisserie. Programmes of learning meet the needs of most learners; however, in a few cases, learners have been advised to take programmes of a broader nature to meet local employment needs. Most learners with prior industry experience do not always have this taken into account when planning their training.

57. Learners receive good personal support. They are visited in the workplace every two to four weeks. Learners have been given help to find alternative employment, sometimes with accommodation. Some learners without transport, who would otherwise find it difficult to attend sessions in the Newport training centre, are collected by the training adviser. One learner on maternity leave has been given additional background knowledge and key skills work to complete and has been supported by weekly visits from the training adviser. Another young learner currently living alone is telephoned each evening to confirm their well being. Training advisers offer sensitive personal advice and guidance enabling learners to make their own decisions. Learners who change employers are monitored to maintain the continuity of their training. Training advisers regularly offer careers advice and arrange interviews for learners. For those learners who attend the training centre, key skills support is good. Not all employers are involved in learners' progress reviews.

58. Induction is satisfactory and learners speak positively about it. They receive a

certificate of induction completion which they value, and which includes their equality, rights and responsibilities programme. For many learners this is the first certificate they have received.

59. Support for learners with literacy and numeracy skills is inadequate, as is language support for learners who speak English as an additional language. SMART Training is aware of learners' additional learning needs, and offers some informal support. However, this informal support is not recorded, and little formal support is provided. The focus for literacy, numeracy and language support at the training centre is on key skills development and not all learners attend the centre. Learners do not have their literacy, numeracy or language ability reassessed to show progress. Training advisers are not qualified to support the learners in the workplace.

Leadership and management

60. SMART Training's leadership and management of the hospitality programmes is satisfactory. The company has made a number of recent improvements to the learners' experience; for example, assessors/training advisers attend weekly team meetings and monthly caseload review meetings where learners making slow progress are identified. Staff have a clear understanding of their roles and responsibilities and training advisers have targets for recruitment, retention and achievement rates. Progress has been made towards improving learners' achievement of NVQ units. Communication and monitoring of staff has improved and is having a direct impact on learners' progress. Recent staff development has enabled staff to offer better support for learners to understand the qualification framework. However, insufficient planning and co-ordination of training takes place. Learners' prior experience is not taken account in planning their training. Training is often informal and incidental to learning. Most learners follow the same timescale for qualification completion, often beginning with the same unit. Individual learning is not coherently planned or delivered to enable learners to develop their knowledge, skills and understanding at an appropriate pace or in line with their job role. Co-ordination between work-based assessors and training centre staff is limited, and additional learning and key skills provision for learners not attending the training centre is very limited. SMART Training's planning for delivery and completion of technical certificates has been fragmented, but is improving. It has produced a calendar giving details of when technical certificates will be offered, but not all learners or employers have a copy of this. Learners who leave before completion are not currently accredited with NVQ unit achievement.

61. Staff have a good level of involvement in the self-assessment process and in the operational development and strategic plan. Staff now have a clear understanding of the aims and objectives of the organisation and how they should be implemented.