

INSPECTION REPORT

Doncaster Metropolitan Borough Council

22 September 2005



ADULT LEARNING
INSPECTORATE

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 aged over 16
- provision in further education colleges for people aged 19 and over
- **learnirect** 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.

Pre-inspection analysis

The resources allocated to a cycle 2 inspection are primarily determined by the findings from the previous inspection. Account is also taken of information about achievement and retention obtained from the funding body, and any significant changes in the size or scope of the provision.

Where a provider has received good grades in cycle 1, the cycle 2 inspection is relatively light. If the provider offers a number of areas of learning, a restricted sample is inspected.

Where a provider has received satisfactory grades in cycle 1, the cycle 2 inspection is less intensive and it is possible that not all areas of learning are included.

Where there are significant unsatisfactory grades from cycle 1, the intensity of the cycle 2 inspection is broadly the same as cycle 1, and all significant areas of learning are inspected.

Providers that have not previously been inspected will receive a full inspection.

Overall effectiveness

The grades given for areas of learning and leadership and management will be used to arrive at a judgement about the overall effectiveness of the provider.

An **outstanding** provider should typically have leadership and management and at least half of the areas of learning judged to be a grade 1. All area of learning grades will be graded 1 or 2.

A **good** provider should have leadership and management and at least half of the area of learning grades judged to be a grade 2 or better. A good training provider should not have any grade 4s, and few grade 3s in the areas of learning.

A **satisfactory** provider should have adequate or better grades in leadership and management and in at least two thirds of the area of learning grades. An adequate provider might have a range of grades across areas of learning, some of which might be graded 4.

Provision will normally be deemed to be **inadequate** where more than one third of the area of learning grades and/or leadership and management are judged to be inadequate.

The final decision as to whether the provision is inadequate rests with the Chief Inspector of Adult Learning.

Grading

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

- *grade 1 - outstanding*
- *grade 2 - good*
- *grade 3 - satisfactory*
- *grade 4 - inadequate*

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INSPECTION REPORT

DESCRIPTION OF THE PROVIDER

1. Doncaster Metropolitan Borough Council (the council) is the largest employer in South Yorkshire with approximately 14,500 employees. It provides work-based learning for young people in customer service, business administration and information and communications technology (ICT). Just under 70 per cent of the learners are employed by the council and the rest are on work placement. They work in 21 different council offices in Doncaster. Learners are recruited through the Connexions service or by internal or external advertisement. All work-based learning is funded by South Yorkshire Learning and Skills Council (LSC).

2. Management responsibility for work-based learning lies with the head of organisational development who reports to the council's corporate director of human resources and organisational development. She is supported by a vocational training and development team consisting of a vocational training and development manager, four human resource consultants, three vocational training and development officers and a contact monitoring officer. The team was formed in April 2001.

3. Doncaster is the largest metropolitan district in England with a population of just under 290,000. Within South Yorkshire, more than one in five of the working age population has no formal qualifications, with higher proportions among minority ethnic groups and disabled people. Just under 23 per cent of South Yorkshire's population consider themselves to have a disability. The proportion of people from minority ethnic communities in Doncaster is 2.3 per cent, compared with 9.1 per cent in England and Wales as a whole.

OVERALL EFFECTIVENESS

Grade 3

4. **The overall effectiveness of the provision is satisfactory.** Leadership and management and quality improvement are both satisfactory and equality of opportunity is good. Training is satisfactory in both business administration and customer service.

5. **The inspection team had some confidence in the reliability of the self-assessment process.** Training staff had been consulted about the council's strengths and weaknesses and the report gave a detailed account of the provision. However, the report was not sufficiently evaluative and some important weaknesses were not identified. The report was not being used effectively to implement further improvements.

6. **The provider has demonstrated that it has sufficient capacity to make improvements.** Since the previous inspection in April 2002, the council has made some improvements to its quality improvement procedures and has improved its procedures for providing pre-course information, monitoring learners' progress and helping unemployed learners to find work. The success rate of unemployed learners at finding work is improving. However, the council has yet to sufficiently improve some important aspects of the learners' experience, such as the provision of key skills training.

KEY CHALLENGES FOR DONCASTER METROPOLITAN BOROUGH COUNCIL:

- improve achievement rates for apprenticeship frameworks
- eliminate weak assessment practices
- develop better methods for evaluating the impact of quality improvement actions
- continue to promote and develop training in equality of opportunity and diversity
- maintain the good quality off-the-job training

GRADES

grade 1 = outstanding, grade 2 = good, grade 3 = satisfactory, grade 4 = inadequate

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

Business administration and law			3
Contributory areas:	Number of learners	Contributory grade	
Administration			
Apprenticeships for young people	51	3	
NVQ training for young people	2	None	
Customer service			
Apprenticeships for young people	28	3	

ABOUT THE INSPECTION

7. At the time of the inspection there were only six learners in ICT so this occupational was not inspected in depth or graded. ICT learners were, however, interviewed during the inspection to support the judgements in leadership and management and in the key findings section of this report. All training procedures apply equally to both customer service and business administration, so these two areas were inspected and reported on generically. All inspection activities took place in a single week in September 2005.

Number of inspectors	4
Number of inspection days	16
Number of learners interviewed	31
Number of staff interviewed	26
Number of employers interviewed	22
Number of locations/sites/learning centres visited	16
Number of partners/external agencies interviewed	1
Number of visits	1

KEY FINDINGS

Achievements and standards

8. **There is good progression into employment.** Many learners are unemployed when they start their learning programme and the council is very effective at helping them to find work. In some years, up to 75 per cent of learners who were unemployed when they started their learning programmes found work. All learners gain good practical skills in their chosen subjects and some also gain rapid promotion once they have found work.

9. **Very few learners on apprenticeship training programmes achieve their full qualification by the set completion date.** Many complete only the national vocational qualification (NVQ) and technical certificate components of their full qualification, with the key skills remaining incomplete for many months.

The quality of provision

Grades given to learning sessions

	Grade 1	Grade 2	Grade 3	Grade 4	Total
Business administration and law	0	2	2	0	4
Total	0	2	2	0	4

10. There is a wide range of well-planned training. Learners attend well-organised and effectively delivered off-the-job training sessions with good, relevant content. They can attend training events on topics such as time management to help them with their day-to-day work, as well as with their qualifications. They are given ample time in the workplace

to practise their new skills.

11. **Arrangements are good to support learners in the workplace.** Learners are visited frequently by training staff. They receive good advice on their learning and confidential support for personal issues if necessary. There is a particularly useful breakfast club attended by many learners to get help with applying for jobs or promotion.

12. **Training for key skills is inflexible.** It is often introduced far too late to keep pace with learners' progress with other aspects of their training and their careers. Training for the application of number, in particular, is often delayed.

13. **There is some weak assessment practice,** where assessors do not record the evidence from observations in sufficient detail to justify their decisions. In a few cases, learners' work has been rejected by the awarding body after it has been submitted for approval by the council.

Leadership and management

14. **Management of resources is good.** The training team is appropriately qualified and works well to meet learners' needs and priorities. Teaching resources are good and include good access to ICT equipment and software and audiovisual equipment.

15. **The council gives a high priority to equality of opportunity** and provides good training in diversity for staff and learners. They attend well-presented workshops on topics such as cultural awareness, race relations, and barriers to work and learning faced by people with disabilities.

16. **There are good arrangements to collect learners' views and feedback** about their training. The council responds quickly to any suggestions or concerns raised.

17. **Insufficient priority is given to learners' overall achievements.** Timely action is not taken to ensure that as many learners as possible successfully complete their full qualifications. When the council introduces improvement actions, it does not always monitor the effectiveness of these actions.

Leadership and management

Strengths

- good management of learning resources
- high strategic priority given to equality of opportunity
- good training in equality of opportunity and diversity for staff and learners
- effective collection and use of feedback

Weaknesses

- insufficient priority given to improving achievement rates
- insufficiently rigorous evaluation of the effectiveness of quality improvement arrangements

Business administration and law

Strengths

- good progression into employment
- wide range of well-planned training
- particularly good arrangements to support learners in the workplace

Weaknesses

- low achievement rates for full apprenticeship and advanced apprenticeship frameworks
- inflexible key skills programme
- some weak assessment practice

WHAT LEARNERS LIKE ABOUT DONCASTER METROPOLITAN BOROUGH COUNCIL:

- the practical and role-playing exercises in the off-the-job training
- learning from each other and working as a team
- getting to know other learners and the work they do for the council
- the lively disability awareness training
- the good opportunities to find work
- the breakfast club
- learning more about how to treat customers
- the readily available support

WHAT LEARNERS THINK DONCASTER METROPOLITAN BOROUGH COUNCIL COULD IMPROVE:

- the repetitive nature of some progress reviews
- the length of the key skills training sessions
- the opportunities to work at their own pace
- the work given by some managers to learners
- the level of challenge - 'me and my assessor get on really well, but she never really challenges me'

DETAILED INSPECTION FINDINGS

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

Grade 3

Strengths

- good management of learning resources
- high strategic priority given to equality of opportunity
- good training in equality of opportunity and diversity for staff and learners
- effective collection and use of feedback

Weaknesses

- insufficient priority given to improving achievement rates
- insufficiently rigorous evaluation of the effectiveness of quality improvement arrangements

18. Management of learning resources is good, a strength identified in the self-assessment report. There are effective arrangements for financial management. Income and expenditure are monitored effectively on a monthly basis. Funding is readily available for staff training and development and for learning resources. For example, all staff recently attended training to help them identify more quickly learners' literacy, numeracy and language skills, during initial assessment and induction. Staff have also been provided with modern mobile ICT equipment to aid communications and record-keeping about contacts with learners in dispersed locations. Within the training team there are very effective arrangements to deploy resources efficiently to meet learners' needs. Time-consuming activities which involve contact with individual or groups of learners with specific needs are always given priority. For example, most learners are visited at least monthly in the workplace, breakfast club events concentrating on job hunting are provided whenever learners require them, and catch-up sessions for learners who have fallen behind with their NVQ progress are arranged whenever needed. Teaching resources, including ICT, audiovisual equipment and written reference materials are widely available and are of a good standard.

19. The council has satisfactory arrangements for collecting and collating management information. It monitors learners' progress throughout their learning programmes and can readily provide accurate data about achievement rates for both full and partial qualifications, attendance rates and retention rates. Regular reports are produced and communicated well to the training team and managers.

20. Arrangements for internal communication are satisfactory. There are regular, well-recorded meetings which keep the training team informed of developments within the council and about learners' overall rates of progress. All training staff are clear about their own and their colleagues' roles and responsibilities.

21. There are satisfactory arrangements for providing additional literacy, numeracy and language support for learners. All learners take a initial assessment test during their recruitment and induction. Further diagnostic testing and individual support is then available from an appropriately qualified specialist tutor through an agreement with another

division of the council.

22. The council gives insufficient priority to improving achievement rates, a weakness partially identified in the self-assessment report. It makes insufficient use of performance data or trends over time to set appropriate and challenging objectives and targets for improvement. Insufficient emphasis is given to this in business planning. For example, there are no individual targets for staff on retention and achievement. There is insufficient consultation with staff about the barriers learners face in completing their full qualification or how these may be resolved. The reasons for low achievement rates are not thoroughly investigated or used to produce action plans for improvement. Insufficient management attention is given to the importance of the key skills programme to learners.

Equality of opportunity

Contributory grade 2

23. The council gives a high strategic priority to equality of opportunity. It has good high-level plans that are related to equality of opportunity and clearly set out its priorities for providing services and learning opportunities that are relevant and available to all sectors of the community. These are communicated well, both within the council and externally, and are reviewed and updated regularly. Targets have been set for greater participation in employment and learning by people from under-represented groups. These are monitored effectively, and steady year-on-year improvements have been recorded. For example, the participation rate for learners with disabilities rose from 2 per cent in 2002-03 to 5 per cent in 2004-05. The council has established close links with representative organisations from the minority ethnic groups. It has also created a new internal consultation group for staff and learners from minority ethnic groups. The proportion of learners drawn from this group is now broadly representative of the local population, although the proportion employed by the council as a whole is lower.

24. The council provides good training in equality of opportunity and diversity for its staff and learners. It has identified increasing knowledge and understanding of diversity by staff and learners as one of its key strategic objectives. All staff and learners attend a good range of effective workshops and other events that give them greater insights into relevant and topical issues. Learners gain greater knowledge of other cultures and a better understanding of the barriers to employment and learning faced by people with disabilities. The workshops are practical, interactive and taught well. They cover topics such as respect and consideration for others and build effectively on the knowledge and cultural background of the participants. The range of workshops covers cultural awareness, disability, equality of opportunity legislation and race relations. The council has good arrangements to keep the breadth of training under review and takes appropriate action to ensure it reflects learners' changing needs. For example, it has recently developed a new workshop to help learners understand the background and needs of the increasing number of asylum seekers in Doncaster. Some learners have already attended this workshop. Some multi-lingual learners put their skills to good use for the wider community by volunteering to join a pool of translators that the council has established to help its customers who speak English as an additional language. Learners' understanding and knowledge of equality of opportunity and diversity is reviewed through relevant discussions and occasional well-chosen research tasks set during their progress reviews.

25. There are effective arrangements to promote learning to all sections of the community through careers fairs at local schools, the Connexions service, press advertisements and a small range of marketing and publicity material.

Quality improvement**Contributory grade 3**

26. The council has effective arrangements to collect and respond to feedback. The views of learners and line managers are collected regularly through the review process and by questionnaires and that data is effectively collated and analysed. Clear actions for improvement are quickly identified and introduced in responses to any concerns or suggestions. For example, the council responded quickly to some learners' dissatisfaction with the pre-course information they received, by producing better information to identify appropriate training sessions for them to attend. Other improvements introduced following line managers' or learners' comments include a better referral process for learners who need literacy, numeracy or language support, increased use of the breakfast club to help learners to apply for jobs, and an improved monitoring system to ensure that learners are making good progress towards completing their NVQs. This monitoring system is used well to develop individual action plans for learners who fall behind schedule, particularly those who do not finish their qualification within the funding period normally allocated by the LSC.

27. Since the previous inspection in 2002, the council has improved its general quality assurance procedures. A satisfactory programme of observations of the key aspects of the learning programme, such as induction, progress reviews and off-the-job training, has been introduced. All training staff receive some feedback on their performance. Most training procedures are clearly recorded and there is an audit system to monitor compliance with these procedures. Arrangements for internal verification are satisfactory. Verification is carried out at appropriate stages of learners' programmes and covers a reasonable sample of work, although some recent shortcomings in the recording of observation evidence were not identified in the sample. There are regular standardisation meetings, at which training staff discuss current practices and are kept up-to-date with changes to awarding body requirements and to the NVQ standards.

28. The council does not evaluate the effectiveness of its quality improvement arrangements thoroughly enough. When actions for improvement are introduced there are not enough procedures to allow their effects on the experience and achievement of learners to be assessed. Some of the actions taken do not resolve the difficulties faced by learners. For example, at the time of the 2002 inspection, the council had just begun to introduce key skills training at an earlier stage in the customer service training programme, but this improvement has still not been fully implemented. Although the self-assessment report identifies some of the current strengths and weaknesses, it does not include an evaluation of the effects of actions introduced after the previous report. Individual training staff have not been given sufficiently clear targets and objectives for introducing the evaluating improvements in their own areas of work.

AREAS OF LEARNING

Business administration and law

Grade 3

Contributory areas:	Number of learners	Contributory grade
Administration		
Apprenticeships for young people	51	3
NVQ training for young people	2	None
Customer service		
Apprenticeships for young people	28	3

29. There are 81 learners in business administration and law. Twenty-eight of these are on an advanced apprenticeship learning programme, 14 in business administration and 14 in customer service. Fifty-one learners are on an apprenticeship learning programme, 41 in business administration and 10 in customer service. Two learners are working towards an NVQ at level 4 in business administration. All learners either are employed by the council or are on an internal work placement. All learners attend monthly off-the-job training and are visited in their workplace on a monthly basis by their assessor. There are seven staff with specific responsibilities for training and assessment.

Strengths

- good progression into employment
- wide range of well-planned training
- particularly good arrangements to support learners in the workplace

Weaknesses

- low achievement rates for full apprenticeship and advanced apprenticeship frameworks
- inflexible key skills programme
- some weak assessment practice

Achievement and standards

32 As identified in the self-assessment report, there is good progression into employment. Most learners are unemployed when they start their learning programmes and are initially found a work placement within the council. As they progress in their learning they are actively encouraged and supported effectively to apply for job vacancies as they arise within the council. In 2002-03, of the 54 learners who were unemployed when they started their learning programme, 66 per cent secured employment. In 2003-04, 64 were unemployed on recruitment into learning and 75 per cent of them have gained jobs to date. In 2004-05, 45 learners were unemployed on recruitment, of whom 55 per cent have already found work, and a further 37 per cent are still in learning and on work placement. In addition to gaining jobs, some learners have also gained rapid promotion to more responsible roles within the council.

31. Learners on the NVQ at level 4 learning programme produce a particularly high standard of work in their portfolios. Their success rate at completing the full qualification is

also good. Learners on all programmes acquire a satisfactory level of workplace skills. They demonstrate appropriate standards of administration and customer service techniques and background knowledge. Very few learners leave any of the programmes before completing their training objectives. For example, since September 2004, 50 learners have begun learning programmes and only seven have since left without achieving their qualifications. This represents a significant improvement since the 2002 inspection. For example, in 2002-03 there were 66 starters on all programmes, of whom 39 left before achieving their full qualifications.

32. A satisfactory proportion of apprenticeship and advanced apprenticeship learners achieve the NVQ and technical certificate components of their frameworks. For example, in the period 2002-2005, over 60 per cent of learners have already successfully achieved all aspects of the NVQ. Since the 2002 inspection there has also been an upward trend in the proportion of learners who achieve their NVQs.

33. Completion rates for full apprenticeship and advanced apprenticeship frameworks are low. Few learners complete the full apprenticeship framework on either of these learning programmes. Of the learners who began either programme in 2002-03, only 22 per cent have so far completed the full framework, and only 11 per cent are still in training. Of the learners who began in 2003-04, only 16 per cent have so far completed the full framework, although a further 41 per cent are still in training. There has been very little achievement by learners who began in 2004-05, but 84 per cent are still in training. This weakness is partially recognised in the self-assessment report, which correctly states that for many learners securing employment is their primary personal goal.

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

LSC funded work-based learning																	
Advanced apprenticeships	2005-06		2004-05		2003-04		2002-03										
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	
Number of starts	1		12		17	100	28	100									
Retained*	0		0		3	18	8	29									
Successfully completed	0		0		3	18	4	14									
Still in learning	1		12		10	59	5	18									

*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	2005-06		2004-05		2003-04		2002-03										
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	
Number of starts	4		37	100	46	100	36										
Retained*	0		1	3	14	30	17										
Successfully completed	0		1	3	7	15	10										
Still in learning	4		29	78	16	35	2										

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

LSC funded work-based learning																	
NVQ Training	2005-06		2004-05		2003-04		2002-03										
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	
Number of starts	0		1		3	100	2	100									
Retained*	0		0		2	67	2	100									
Successfully completed	0		0		2	67	2	100									
Still in learning	0		1		1	33	0	0									

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

The quality of provision

34. There is a wide range of well-planned training to develop effectively learners' skills and knowledge. This strength is identified in the self-assessment report. Tutors make good use of clear, well-structured lesson plans. These are supported by good learning materials including relevant handouts to reinforce learning effectively. Learners take part in well-designed role-play and undertake a good range of learning activities on topics such as handling customer complaints, report writing and telephone skills. Many learners attend a particularly thought-provoking session on disability awareness. Learners use their training to meet with learners from other departments to discuss common issues and share ideas. There are extensive opportunities for learners to attend additional training courses on subjects relevant to their day-to-day work. For example, learners have recently attended relevant training in handling violence and aggression, time management and data protection. These courses are planned effectively to meet individual learners' needs. On-the-job training is also well planned and effectively delivered, usually on an individual basis. Most learners are given ample opportunity to practise their new skills under supervision in their workplaces.

35. As identified in the self-assessment report, there are particularly good arrangements to support learners in the workplace. All workplaces are well resourced and provide learners with good opportunities to develop appropriate job skills. Many line managers have themselves completed NVQs with the council and have a good understanding of the requirements of this part of the learning programme. Others have attended briefing sessions on the qualification to improve their understanding of learners' needs. They provide good advice to learners about evidence collection and allow ample time for learners to work on their portfolios and other learning activities in the workplace. Additional assessment opportunities and support sessions are readily arranged at learners' request. In addition to formal reviews and assessment, there is frequent informal contact between the training staff and learners through e-mail, the telephone and informal visits. Learners have high levels of respect for the training staff and regard them as valuable sources of confidential advice and support on a wide range of issues. There is a very successful and well-attended breakfast club which helps learners to find jobs and to gain promotion. Useful advice on finding job vacancies, filling in application forms, and interview technique is supplemented with a valuable information pack containing blank application forms, tips on filling them out and sample interview questions. This information is regularly updated with feedback from learners who have been successful at recent job interviews. Constructive comments are also sought from the interview panel on the performance of unsuccessful candidates and these are well used in individual debriefing sessions with the learners concerned.

36. Very few of the current learners require additional support for literacy, numeracy or language. However, if the need arises, there is a well-established procedure for support to be delivered by a specialist tutor who normally works in another division of the council.

37. Arrangements for delivering key skills training are inflexible. The scheduling of off-the-job training sessions does not fully meet individual learners' needs, or keep pace with their progress in other components of their learning programmes. In some cases, learners' completion of their frameworks is delayed significantly. For example, some learners have not completed the relevant key skills training 12 months after completing their NVQs. Training in application of number is often introduced particularly late in the programmes. A weakness in the council's key skills strategy was identified at the inspection in 2002, and although various actions have been taken the council has not been successful in smoothly integrating key skills training into the full teaching programme.

38. There is some weak assessment practice, a weakness not identified in the self-assessment report. There is insufficient recording by assessors to justify assessment decisions. Some evidence does not meet the requirements of the qualification and in some cases it is not attributable to the learner. Some recent key skills evidence and assessments were rejected by the awarding body. During initial assessment and induction, there are insufficiently rigorous procedures to ensure from the outset that all learners are enrolled on the programme that most closely matches their job role and career aims. Some line managers are not sufficiently involved in the review process to help plan any changes needed in their job role at the most appropriate stage of their learning programme.

Leadership and management

39. Learners have an extensive understanding of equality of opportunity, which is covered effectively in induction, at off-the-job training sessions and at progress reviews. Many learners also attend additional training on issues such as cultural awareness, understanding disability and the implications of equality of opportunity legislation for the workplace.

40. Staff have appropriate occupational experience and there are sufficient qualified assessors and verifiers. Staff meetings are held regularly to discuss general issues including awarding body feedback and there are also some standardisation exercises for both administration and customer service. Internal verification is carried out regularly and according to awarding body requirements.

41. The self-assessment report gave useful and detailed information about the area of learning. However, examples of normal practice were incorrectly claimed as strengths and some issues identified as weaknesses are satisfactory. The report also failed to identify some important weaknesses, particularly the inflexibility of the key skills programme which is adversely affecting many learners' potential to achieve the full apprenticeship qualification.

