

INSPECTION REPORT

Didac Ltd

01 June 2006



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
- adult information, advice and guidance services (**nextstep**).

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*

INSPECTION REPORT

Didac Ltd

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INSPECTION REPORT

DESCRIPTION OF THE PROVIDER

1. Didac Ltd (Didac) was established in Bristol in 1997. It has a contract with Somerset Learning and Skills Council (LSC) to provide work-based learning in engineering for approximately 22 learners. Learners are employed in Somerset, Gloucester, Wiltshire, Devon and Cornwall. Learners follow a range of qualifications in machine woodworking, furniture/joinery and saw milling. All learners follow health and safety programmes. Outside the scope of this inspection, Didac also provides full-cost-recovery training courses for a wide range of organisations. Didac has three directors, one of whom acts as a full-time operational manager, and five other staff who provide training, assessment and administrative support. None of the 22 learners in training has a disability or is from a minority ethnic background. Didac has no female learners at present.

OVERALL EFFECTIVENESS

Grade 2

2. **The overall effectiveness of the provision is good.** Leadership and management and equality of opportunity are good. Training in engineering and manufacturing technologies is satisfactory as is quality improvement.

3. **The inspection team was broadly confident in the reliability of the self-assessment process.** Staff are clear about their contribution to the self-assessment process, and account is taken of the views of learners and employers. The self-assessment report identifies most areas for improvement, although it is insufficiently clear about the actions needed to tackle the key weakness in achievement. Action has been taken to improve teaching and learning, and this is having a good effect on learners' experience, but the self-assessment report does not take sufficient account of this action.

4. **The provider has demonstrated that it is in a good position to make improvements.** Its policies provide a realistic framework for improvement and are consistent with its role as a small provider of specialist training in the wood trades industry. Its very effective partnership work has significant benefit for learners. Managers are making increasing use of learners' feedback, and the improvements are beginning to overcome the weakness in achievement. Careful management of resources has enabled Didac to provide better learning resources including laptop computers and software to support learners. The new 'Woodwise' programme should further improve these resources. Consistent in-house staff development is improving staff skills. Staff strongly support the focus on learners. The management information system provides easy access to information on learners, and data is increasingly used for improving quality. Didac has made staff changes in the past year and plans to enhance the roles of existing staff in order to carry through its improvement plans.

KEY CHALLENGES FOR DIDAC LTD:

- improve framework achievement

- improve key skills achievement
- further develop self-assessment and action-planning
- improve target-setting
- improve assessment practice
- continue to further promote equality and diversity among learners and employers

GRADES

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

Grades awarded at inspection

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

Engineering and manufacturing technologies			3
Contributory areas:	Number of learners	Contributory grade	
<i>Manufacturing technologies</i>		3	
Apprenticeships for young people	22	3	

ABOUT THE INSPECTION

5. At Didac's previous inspection in July 2003, leadership and management and equality of opportunity were given grade 2. The engineering area of learning received a grade 2, and quality assurance a grade 3. In the current inspection, the provision in engineering is satisfactory. Leadership and management and equality of opportunity are good. Quality improvement is satisfactory.

Number of inspectors	3
Number of inspection days	3
Number of learners interviewed	9
Number of staff interviewed	20
Number of employers interviewed	7
Number of locations/sites/learning centres visited	7
Number of partners/external agencies interviewed	1

KEY FINDINGS

Achievements and standards

6. **Practical skills development is good and learners' work is of a high standard.** In some instances, the standard is above the requirements of the qualification learners are working towards. Learners maintain high levels of performance in the workplace and carry out most work activities with minimal supervision.

7. **Achievement rates on engineering programmes are very low.** Twenty-eight learners started apprenticeships between 2002-03 and 2004-05 but only one has achieved an apprenticeship framework. Of the five learners who started level 3 programmes in the same period, one achieved the qualification, and of 10 who started level 2 programmes, nine achieved the qualification. Between 2004 and 2006, Didac experienced staffing problems and learners' progress and achievement declined.

8. Before 2005-06, **key skills training started late in the programme for many learners, and they made slow progress** mainly because of a change in awarding body. Six of the current 22 learners on programme are out of their funding period. For new learners, key skills are being introduced earlier, and these learners are now making satisfactory progress towards the awards. New staff have been appointed. Resources are good and key skills are integrated into training. Learners on apprenticeship programmes are making better progress.

The quality of provision

Grades given to learning sessions

	Grade 1	Grade 2	Grade 3	Grade 4	Total
Engineering and manufacturing technologies	0	1	1	0	2
Total	0	1	1	0	2

9. **Teaching and training at Didac are good.** All learners have frequent individual tuition with a trainer at their employers' premises. Trainers are well qualified and have very good current professional knowledge. Their practical demonstrations are effective and maintain learners' interest. The standard of coaching by Didac staff is particularly good.

10. **Didac has very strong links with employers** and maintains frequent and productive contact. Training programmes are individually agreed between learners, employers and Didac. Employers have high regard for Didac, and regard them as partners in the apprentice programme. Training resources are sufficient to ensure the quality of the training provided.

11. **Learner support is very good.** Working relationships between trainers and learners are very effective and focus on learners' needs. Learners are able to contact their trainers by telephone at any time. Staff help learners who experience family and personal problems, and some of the support takes place outside normal working hours.

12. Learners receive satisfactory literacy and numeracy support, which they appreciate. All learners have a thorough initial assessment during their induction period, to identify any

learning support needs.

13. Assessment for the national vocational qualification (NVQ) is satisfactory. Assessment methods are sound and appropriate, but the assessments are not recorded in sufficient detail. Learners are seldom given sufficient written feedback on their assessments. NVQ portfolios of evidence are satisfactory.

Leadership and management

14. **Didac's leadership is strong.** The company has a high profile and is highly respected within the industry in the specialist area of saw milling and wood trades. There is a strong common focus on supporting the individual needs of learners. Didac achieves a good balance of commercially successful activities that add value to the experience of its learners and employers. It is innovative in identifying new provision where there are gaps in training.

15. Didac has **highly effective and long-standing links with employers.** The employers have a good understanding of the organisation's values, aims and objectives, and consider Didac to be a partner in training. Didac provides them with a good range of up-to-date advice and information, and training packages for health and safety and equality of opportunity are made to measure for each workplace. There is a good level of communication between learners, their trainers and employers. Newsletters, telephone calls and e-mail ensure contact is frequent and effective.

16. Didac has developed **very productive partnerships.** It has effective links with a number of sector skills organisations, trade associations and awarding bodies. The organisation has been closely involved in helping to review the national qualification standards for machining. It works across counties and with a number of LSCs, a college, schools and the Connexions service. It was part of a successful employer training pilot (ETP) project in 2004-05, where six out of seven learners following level 2 programmes achieved their qualifications.

17. **Didac's management of its equality of opportunity arrangements is good.** Its policies on equal opportunities, harassment and other related issues are comprehensive and are accompanied by appropriate procedures. Copies are given to all learners during their induction, and employers receive copies when the policies are updated. All learners are employed, and in cases where learners are made redundant, Didac makes every effort to find them alternative employment. Learners receive flexibly timed and frequent visits. Most employers' premises visited during the inspections were free from inappropriate posters and literature.

18. Didac's approach to quality assurance has improved since the 2003 inspection and is satisfactory. The quality assurance arrangements are comprehensive. Managers and staff meet regularly to review the standard of training and assessment. Learners are encouraged to evaluate their training programme. Many issues recognised by the organisation have been resolved recently. The retention rate has improved and a number of frameworks are now almost ready for accreditation.

19. **Didac is slow to deal with its key weaknesses.** Insufficient priority has been given to remedying the poor achievement rates. All learners are aware of the target completion

date for their awards but many make slow progress towards meeting this. Learners do not always know whether they are making good progress.

20. The self-assessment process is comprehensive and takes account of the views of those learners and employers who respond to questionnaires. The report is written against the key questions of the Common Inspection Framework, and staff meet to discuss a draft version. The report identifies most of the same strengths as found by inspectors, although the key weakness in achievement of frameworks is omitted. The report is too descriptive and makes insufficiently critical judgements in some areas.

Leadership and management

Strengths

- strong leadership
- very productive links with employers
- highly effective partnerships
- good management of equality and diversity arrangements

Weaknesses

- slow action to bring about improvement

Engineering and manufacturing technologies

Manufacturing technologies

Strengths

- good practical skills development
- good teaching and training
- very strong links with employers
- particularly good support for learners

Weaknesses

- low achievement rate for apprenticeship frameworks
- late introduction of key skills training for many learners

WHAT LEARNERS LIKE ABOUT DIDAC LTD:

- 'the way trainers show the best way for me to work'
- support from Didac staff 'who never moan when we ring, whatever the time'
- the good practical training
- the opportunity to work at lunchtimes and get help individually on a particular skill
- the frequency of visits by the training officer
- the opportunity to go to Didac for training in computer-aided design (CAD) and computer-aided manufacturing (CAM)

WHAT LEARNERS THINK DIDAC LTD COULD IMPROVE:

- the timing of the key skills part of the training - it needs to start earlier in the programme
- the number of training sessions - it would be useful to have more

DETAILED INSPECTION FINDINGS

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

Grade 2

Strengths

- strong leadership
- very productive links with employers
- highly effective partnerships
- good management of equality and diversity arrangements

Weaknesses

- slow action to bring about improvement

21. Didac's leadership is strong. The company has a high profile and is well respected in the specialist saw milling and wood machining industry. Its strategic and business planning processes are well established and well recorded. Staff at different levels of the organisation understand its strategic aims and objectives, and are kept informed of development plans. Meetings take place regularly and are well documented. Internal communications are effective. The management team is open and supportive. Managers are approachable and they value and respect their staff and learners.

22. There is a strong common focus on supporting the individual needs of learners. Managers analyse performance and they direct improvements clearly. They are innovative in identifying new provision where there are gaps in training. For example, the 'Woodwise' programme, which provides training at level 1 in the safe operation of one or two machines, leads to a nationally recognised qualification. Didac achieves a good balance of commercially successful activities that add value to the experience of its learners and employers. It has a strong focus on reducing risk for its learners and improving health and safety standards for the industry.

23. Didac has very productive links with employers. There is a good level of communication between learners, their trainers and employers, through newsletters, telephone calls and e-mail. In many cases, relationships with employers have been built up over a long period, and the employers have a good understanding of the company's values, aims and objectives. Employers consider Didac to be a partner in training. Didac provides them with a good range of up-to-date advice and information, helping them to improve their work environment and learners' opportunities for learning.

24. Employers place high levels of trust in Didac's staff. The staff work effectively with some employers to place learners who change jobs, and they help others with their recruitment process. Didac helps employers to identify new opportunities for their businesses and provides training for supervisors if requested. One employer has sent learners on a CAD/CAM training course at Didac and is now considering purchasing CAD/CAM software to enhance its business interests. Training packages for health and safety and equality of opportunity are made to measure for the needs of each workplace.

25. Didac has developed very productive partnerships with external organisations. It has

effective links with a number of sector skills councils, trade associations and awarding bodies. It makes good use of its links with industry leaders, and has a high profile in helping to review the national qualification standards for machining. It provides an apprenticeship stand at exhibitions and careers fairs, to continue to increase recruitment from under-represented groups. It works effectively with Connexions to attract young people to the industry, and works with other organisations when learners require support. Didac is developing its links with a local college to provide training jointly through a new furniture academy for the Southwest. It is working with a local school to provide level 1 qualifications in furniture. Didac works across counties and local LSC areas. It operated a successful ETP project in 2004-05, at which six out of seven learners following a level 2 programme achieved their qualification.

26. The use of management information is satisfactory. The system integrates the functions of an effective learner monitoring system and is capable of producing a comprehensive range of reports to support the management of the company. The learner monitoring system records all the details of learners' progress and is used effectively to flag up slow progress. Data is used regularly to monitor performance against contractual targets, and in risk and business planning.

27. The management of finances and resources is satisfactory. Didac monitors its financial position closely and uses this information in business planning and to support the expansion of the organisation. Resources for training are good and managers are experienced and well qualified. Trainer/assessors have appropriate qualifications and experience, and they take part in a range of in-house staff development opportunities. Staff have annual appraisals, but these are not always completed to plan. Staff receive sufficient training in implementing the key components of training including equality of opportunity. They are particularly well trained in health and safety, and Didac's checks of workplaces are thorough. Workplaces are generally of a high standard.

28. Didac has satisfactory arrangements for the provision of literacy and numeracy support and has recognised where improvements could be made. Initial assessment is effective, and each trainer provides individual support in the workplace. Learners clearly understand where their strengths and weaknesses lie. Support is integrated with training activities and materials. Resources for teaching and learning are satisfactory, and there are laptop computers available for learners to use. Workbooks contain contextualised material which learners find relevant and interesting.

Equality of opportunity

Contributory grade 2

29. Management of the equality of opportunity arrangements is good. Didac has comprehensive policies on equal opportunities, harassment and other related issues that are accompanied by appropriate procedures. Copies are given to all learners during their induction and employers receive copies when the policies are updated. All learners are employed and in cases where learners are made redundant Didac makes every effort to find them alternative employment. Didac provides training for non-LSC-funded employees by negotiation with individual employers. Most employers' premises visited during the inspection were free from inappropriate posters and literature.

30. Didac's staff have a clear commitment to, and good understanding of, equality of opportunity and diversity. Members of staff have recently presented equality and diversity training events for southwest region providers and Somerset LSC. Trainers develop good

training materials which are used effectively at induction. Colourful computerised presentations are well written and designed to be easily read. Their contents are used later in training to supplement learners' knowledge. Most learners have a satisfactory understanding of equality and diversity, but this is general and shows little depth of knowledge.

31. The quality of materials available to learners has significantly improved. Didac has introduced a computerised resource package which allows users to change the screen background, the size and type of font, and the style of layout at the touch of a button. Trainers have this facility on their laptop computers. Didac has developed a training programme called 'Woodwise' which is designed to provide online learning and assessment in a range of subjects allied mainly to health and safety. Learners can access this resource and assessment on demand. The assignments and assessments also contribute evidence for key skills accreditation.

32. Didac monitors employers' equal opportunities arrangements thoroughly. Most employers have their own equal opportunities policy and those that do not, adopt Didac's policy. A clear grievance and complaints procedure is set out in Didac's procedures manual. Learners and employers are given clear and comprehensive guidance notes and a useful additional booklet on diversity and harassment. Despite continued efforts to recruit from under-represented groups, Didac has no female learners or learners with a minority ethnic background. There is one female assessor/trainer. Didac checks and monitors employers' recruitment practices, and analyses equal opportunities data from the industry. It conducts an annual survey of the number and type of people working for each employer. The survey includes data on the number and type of applicants for each vacancy as well as the number and type of learners recruited. This information is used to encourage employers to increase the number of learners from under-represented groups.

33. Didac's marketing materials promote equality of opportunity using appropriate images. Staff check learners' understanding during progress reviews. Most employers attend their learners' progress reviews, and when issues have been raised, they have been resolved effectively. Didac is working with a local school to provide level 1 NVQs and to promote the wood industry as a career to under-represented groups.

Quality improvement

Contributory grade 3

34. Didac's approach to quality assurance has improved since it was inspected in 2003. The company has comprehensive quality assurance arrangements with clearly written policies and procedures that are regularly reviewed and updated. They cover all the key components of training and assessment. Managers and staff meet regularly to review the standard of training and assessment. They compare their performance against the information collected from reports on similar organisations.

35. Staff actively seek feedback from learners and employers, both formally and informally. Learners know who to complain to but they make few complaints, as staff take prompt action to support them if problems arise. Learners are encouraged to evaluate their training programme, and Didac uses clearly written questionnaires to gather their views and those of their employers. However, too few responses are received for the analysis to be used effectively to plan action for improvement.

36. There are many examples of successful initiatives which have improved the quality of

the provision. Retention rates improved after Didac reviewed and improved initial assessment and the induction process. The company has sought feedback from staff and learners and improved and standardised the documents it uses, including individual learning plans and review forms. Assessment and internal verification practices and procedures are generally satisfactory.

37. Despite the considerable improvements made, Didac has been slow to deal with its key weaknesses. Insufficient priority has been given to the poor achievement rate. All learners are aware of the target date for completing their qualifications, but many make slow progress towards meeting this. The learners do not always know whether they are making good progress. The self-assessment report recognises the need to improve learners' progress towards their key skills qualifications, and managers have taken action but it is too early to see the effect of this on framework achievement.

38. The targets set for learners at progress reviews have improved, but they are generally connected to the NVQ units and not to learners' wider skills needs. The new system of checking and monitoring reviews has yet to be fully implemented. To improve key skills achievement and maintain good training, staff have many very good learning resources available on their laptop computers to use on employers' premises. These include well-structured presentations with videoclips. Didac has experienced some staffing problems, but these have recently been resolved. Staff training is satisfactory and mainly responds to need. There is no formal organisational learning plan linked to the development plan or to staff development needs identified in appraisal. However, good use is made of visits to employers' premises to help staff keep their skills and knowledge of the wood trades industry up to date.

39. The self-assessment process is comprehensive and includes the views of those learners and employers who respond to questionnaires. The report is written against the key questions of the Common Inspection Framework and staff meet to discuss it before the final version is agreed. Most of the strengths match those identified by inspectors, although the development plan does not focus on the key weakness in achievement. The report is highly descriptive and makes insufficiently critical judgements in some areas.

AREAS OF LEARNING

Engineering and manufacturing technologies

Grade 3

Contributory areas:	Number of learners	Contributory grade
Manufacturing technologies		3
Apprenticeships for young people	22	3

40. There are 22 engineering learners, of whom seven are apprentices, 13 are advanced apprentices and two are on NVQ programmes at levels 2 and 3. All learners are employed in furniture manufacturing or joinery companies and saw mills in the Southwest. They are following programmes of machine woodworking, furniture manufacture, saw milling, or bench joinery. Training is individualised to suit the needs of learners and employers. All training and assessment takes place in the workplace and is carried out by Didac staff. Didac employs three full-time and five part-time trainer/assessors. Visits to the workplace normally take place every three to four weeks but can be more frequent if required. They are used to provide off-the-job training sessions, assessments and progress reviews.

Manufacturing technologies

Strengths

- good practical skills development
- good teaching and training
- very strong links with employers
- particularly good support for learners

Weaknesses

- low achievement rate for apprenticeship frameworks
- late introduction of key skills training for many learners

Achievement and standards

41. Learners develop good practical skills and work to a high standard. In some instances, the standard is above the requirements of the learners' qualification. Most employers speak highly of the skills the learners have developed and confidently allow learners to carry out many work activities with minimal supervision. Learners take pride in the work they produce and are motivated to maintain high standards.

42. Achievement rates on engineering programmes are very low. Only one apprentice has achieved a framework, although 28 started programmes between 2002-03 and 2004-05. Of the five learners who started level 3 NVQ programmes during this period, only one achieved the qualification, and of 10 who started level 2 programmes, nine achieved the qualification. Between 2004 and 2006, Didac experienced staffing problems and learners' progress and achievement declined.

43. For many learners who started before 2005-06, key skills training was introduced late in their programme and they have made slow progress. Six of the current 22 learners on programme are out of their funding period. New learners are introduced to key skills earlier and are now making satisfactory progress. New staff are now in place. Resources are good and key skills are integrated into training. Learners' progress on apprenticeship programmes is improving.

Programme	End Year	Success Rate	No, of learners	Provider NVQ Rate	National NVQ Rate	Provider framework rate	National framework rate
Advanced Apprenticeships	2003-04	overall	3	33	51	33	17
		timely	3	0	44	0	13
	2004-05	overall	4	50	53	25	31
		timely	4	50	45	25	25
NVQ training for young	2003-04	overall	1	100	17	0	0
		timely	1	0	10	0	0
	2004-05	overall	6	83	44	0	0
		timely	6	84	17	0	0

For details of how to calculate overall and timely success rates please refer to the "Quality Improvement Pack" (available from the Learning and Skills Council's website: www.lsc.gov.uk).

The quality of provision

44. Teaching and training are good. All learners have individual tuition with a trainer/assessor at their employers' premises, usually every four weeks but more frequently if required. Trainers are well qualified and have very good current professional knowledge. Learners and employers are very satisfied with the standard of teaching and consider the standards to be high. Training materials are good. Many have been developed by Didac. Presentations are each clearly focused on key aspects of the training. The materials include good clear diagrams, photographs and videos of relevant technical topics. They are all stored on computer and are delivered in the workplace using laptop computers. The presentations are supported by good, contextualised handouts and workbooks that form part of the learners' portfolios of evidence.

45. Trainer/assessors' practical demonstrations are effective and maintain learners' interest, and the standard of coaching is particularly good. Learners' practical skills are very good and this is evident from the high standard of their work. They carry out individual projects in order to develop the skills necessary to achieve the NVQ. These projects are adapted to suit their employers' working methods and equipment. Some learners are working on prestigious individual commissions.

46. There is good promotion of health and safety practices. During their induction, all learners receive effective health and safety training in the workplace. The company has close links with the Health and Safety Executive, and is aware of current standards and good practice. The training is effective, and learners have a good understanding of how to minimise risk and take sufficient care in the workplace. However, inspectors observed some lapses of safety standards at some employers' premises.

47. Links with employers are very effective. Contact between Didac's staff and employers is frequent and productive. Training programmes are individually agreed between learners, employers and Didac. Employers regard Didac as partners in the apprenticeship programme, and in some cases, have requested that learners take additional NVQ units relevant to their production requirements. Training resources are sufficient to ensure the quality of training.

48. Learners are very well supported. Working relationships between trainers and learners are very effective and focus on learners' needs. Learners are given their trainers' telephone numbers and are able to contact them at any time. All learners speak highly of the support given by their employers and Didac's staff. Staff have helped learners who experience family and personal problems, and some of the support takes place outside normal working hours. There are initiatives in place to improve learners' confidence, with some learners taking part in industry exhibitions.

49. Learners receive satisfactory literacy and numeracy support, which they appreciate. All learners have a thorough initial assessment during their induction period, to identify any learning support needs.

50. Assessment for the NVQ is satisfactory. The assessment methods are sound and appropriate, but the assessments are not recorded in sufficient detail. Learners are seldom given enough written feedback on their assessments. NVQ portfolios of evidence are satisfactory. Many contain good photographic evidence, but in some there is insufficient evidence, particularly at level 3.

Leadership and management

51. Trainers manage their time well and additional visits are organised if learners require support. Didac has good working partnerships with employers, and trainers have open access to their premises to see learners. Employers participate in learners' progress reviews and take a keen interest in Didac's on-site training. Staff development in health and safety and key skills is good. Trainers provide planned and well-organised training sessions. Employers make good use of trainers' expertise to ensure the progress of their learners. Learners have a satisfactory understanding of equality of opportunity.

52. Didac's 'Woodwise' training programme is designed to provide online learning and assessment in a range of subjects allied mainly to health and safety topics. Learners can access this resource and assessment on demand. The assignments and assessments also contribute evidence for key skills accreditation.

53. The low framework achievement rate was identified in the self-assessment report. Didac recognised that slow progress with the accreditation of key skills has contributed significantly to this. Progress has been hampered mainly by a change in awarding body, staff changes and the focus of the sector skills organisation on a variation in key skills requirements. Didac has recently overcome these problems, and learners are now making satisfactory progress in key skills.

