

INSPECTION REPORT

Nova Training

09 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

Nova Training

Contents

Summary

Description of the provider	1
Overall effectiveness	1
Key challenges for Nova Training	2
Grades	2
About the inspection	3
Key Findings	3
What learners like about Nova Training	7
What learners think Nova Training could improve	7

Detailed inspection findings

Leadership and management	8
Equality of opportunity	9
Quality improvement	10
Engineering and manufacturing technologies	12
Preparation for life and work	14
Business administration and law	17

INSPECTION REPORT

DESCRIPTION OF THE PROVIDER

1. NOVA Training is part of Staff Select Ltd and is based in the Black Country. Owned by its managing director, it was founded in 1992. The company currently holds contracts with the Learning and Skills Council and Jobcentre Plus. There are 124 learners following apprenticeships, national vocational qualifications (NVQs) and Entry to Employment (E2E) programmes. Also, many pupils from local schools attend certificate programmes at the provider.
2. NOVA Training has its head office in Willenhall, Walsall and operates from six centres, five in the Black Country and one in Telford. Four of its centres deliver vocational programmes for 14 to 16 year olds and E2E programmes. The centre in Willenhall delivers apprenticeships and E2E programmes.
3. The company employs 37 members of staff, of which 25 are management and administrative support, and 12 are tutors and assessors. The managing director is accountable for the overall strategic planning of the company. The operations director is responsible for the day-to-day operational management of the company and reports directly to the managing director. The operations director is supported by the quality improvement manager and the contract operations manager. Each of the five centres has a centre manager.
4. The provider is located in an area where minority ethnic group members represent 11 per cent of the total population, compared with the national rate of 9.1 per cent according to the 2001 census. The unemployment rate in Walsall in April 2006 was 4.5 per cent, compared with the overall UK rate of 3.5 per cent.

OVERALL EFFECTIVENESS

Grade 4

5. **The overall effectiveness of the provision is inadequate.** NOVA Training's leadership and management are inadequate. Its approach to equality of opportunity is satisfactory but its arrangements for quality improvement are inadequate. Provision is good in preparation for life and work and satisfactory in engineering and manufacturing technologies, but is inadequate in business administration and law.
6. **The inspection team had little confidence in the reliability of the self-assessment process.** NOVA Training produced a yearly self-assessment report in January 2006 and updated it in May. Staff are not consistently involved in the process and learners' and employers' views are not clearly captured in the self-assessment report. Many of the comments in the report are too descriptive and not analytical enough. Inspectors only agreed partially with the report's findings. Judgments from the self-assessment process are reflected in the company's development plans, but these do not contain specific and measurable actions to rectify the highlighted weaknesses.
7. **The provider has demonstrated that it has sufficient capacity to make improvements.** Managers have taken appropriate steps to rectify the significant health and safety weakness

NOVA TRAINING

identified at the previous inspection. Standards have been maintained in preparation for life and work, and improved in engineering. However, the quality of business administration training has deteriorated. Some key weaknesses, for example in NOVA Training's approach to literacy and numeracy support, and in the self-assessment process, have not been resolved.

KEY CHALLENGES FOR NOVA TRAINING:

- increase achievement rates
- ensure data is used effectively
- strengthen strategic planning
- improve the self-assessment process and ensure that it is fully inclusive
- fully implement an effective literacy, numeracy and language support strategy
- improve measures to monitor the quality of learning and assessment
- improve planning on the E2E programme

GRADES

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

Grades awarded at inspection

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

Engineering and manufacturing technologies		3
Contributory areas:	Number of learners	Contributory grade
Motor vehicle		3
Apprenticeships for young people	22	3

Preparation for life and work		2
Contributory areas:	Number of learners	Contributory grade
Employability training		2
Entry to Employment	88	2

Business administration and law		4
Contributory areas:	Number of learners	Contributory grade
Administration		4
Apprenticeships for young people	14	4

ABOUT THE INSPECTION

8. All areas of learning offered by NOVA Training were reported on and graded with the exception of retail and commercial enterprise, where the number of learners was very low. The provision in engineering and manufacturing technologies, preparation for life and work, and business administration and law was inspected.

Number of inspectors	5
Number of inspection days	20
Number of learners interviewed	45
Number of staff interviewed	62
Number of employers interviewed	11
Number of locations/sites/learning centres visited	16
Number of visits	1

KEY FINDINGS

Achievements and standards

9. **Learners develop good personal and communication skills on the E2E programme.**

The E2E provision focuses well on developing communication skills and encouraging learners to work together. Learners attend a series of activities that help them develop problem-solving and teamwork skills.

10. **Learners on E2E programmes progress well into positive outcomes** such as further education, training or employment. Of the current intake, 60 learners are still in learning and the progression rate is 32 per cent. Learners develop confidence and self-esteem while gaining employability skills. Their rate of progression into employment is good.

11. The standard of learners' work is satisfactory across all areas of learning.

12. The qualification success rates in business administration are satisfactory.

13. Learners in engineering and manufacturing technologies did not start their programme until September 2005. The retention rate is high, and learners are making satisfactory progress.

The quality of provision

14. **NOVA Training provides good support for all learners.** Learners receive support with coursework, finding workplaces and relocating to new placements. Workplaces are well resourced. NOVA Training's staff respond rapidly to requests for work-based assessments by learners.

15. **Learners on E2E programmes have very effective work placements.** A good range of placements is available for learners including in motor vehicle, business, retail and warehousing areas. NOVA Training is highly flexible, arranging taster work placements to

help learners decide the best work placement for them.

16. In business administration, reviews are very effectively led by the learners.

Employers and learners take an active role during the progress reviews and learners set their own future review targets.

17. Teaching and learning are satisfactory.

18. E2E learners' reviews are not adequately recorded. Learners' reviews take place regularly, but some of the review documents are incomplete and targets are often too general, making it difficult to measure short-term progress.

19. Literacy and numeracy support is inadequate for learners in business administration. The identification of learning support needs is not consistently recorded and does not always link with the results of diagnostic testing. Targets are not set to meet the identified needs, and support is provided by assessors who are not qualified or experienced in this type of learning need.

20. The management of assessment is poor in business administration. Learners do not receive sufficient guidance and encouragement to fully complete NVQ units, even where little additional evidence is required.

Leadership and management

21. NOVA Training has developed good links with external organisations. These links have enabled the provider to access best practice, and have directly benefited the learners.

22. Resources are satisfactory for learners at NOVA Training. Learners have access to adequate equipment and learning materials and staff are appropriately qualified and vocationally competent.

23. Internal communication is satisfactory. NOVA Training holds monthly operations meetings in which issues such as health and safety, and learners' feedback are discussed. The provider also uses a newsletter to communicate information to members of staff throughout their several training centres.

24. Some aspects of the E2E programme are not sufficiently planned. NOVA Training has no planned curriculum to show clearly what training and support learners are entitled to during the programme.

25. Arrangements for equality of opportunity are satisfactory at NOVA Training. Learners display a satisfactory knowledge of equality and opportunity issues and are aware of the grievance and disciplinary procedures. NOVA Training makes effective use of its links with the community to widen participation.

26. The self-assessment process is poor. Staff are not consistently involved in the process. Learners' and employers' views are not purposely gathered during the process. The process does not have a sufficiently formal structure with clear activities and timescales. The self-assessment report is produced annually and reviewed regularly, but it is not analytical enough.

27. The feedback from teaching and learning observations is not used appropriately to develop tutors or to monitor improvements.

28. The arrangements for internal verification are incomplete and the procedures are unclear. There is no effective feedback mechanism to assessors and the organisation does not share practice effectively.

29. NOVA Training regularly gathers feedback from learners and employers. **However, it does not monitor information over time to identify areas for improvement.**

30. The quality assurance procedures are regularly audited but there is no record of action plans being designed following the identification of any areas of improvement. The senior management team carries out no audit of the quality procedures.

Leadership and management

Strengths

- good links with external organisations

Weaknesses

- inadequate strategy for literacy and numeracy support
- insufficient use of data
- weak strategic planning
- inadequate measures to monitor the quality of training and assessment

Engineering and manufacturing technologies

Motor vehicle

Strengths

- good support for learners

Weaknesses

- poor internal verification

Preparation for life and work

Employability training

Strengths

- good development of personal and communication skills
- very effective work placements
- well-focused individual support for learners

Weaknesses

- inadequate recording of reviews
- inadequate planning of some aspects of the E2E programme

Business administration and law

Administration

Strengths

- effective learner-led reviews

Weaknesses

- inadequate literacy and numeracy support
- weak internal verification
- poor assessment

WHAT LEARNERS LIKE ABOUT NOVA TRAINING:

- 'they help you to achieve'
- making friends and socialising
- 'you can gain skills and qualifications'
- that assessors are always helpful and available

WHAT LEARNERS THINK NOVA TRAINING COULD IMPROVE:

- the help received with information technology
- 'more group work with key skills'
- the number of computers available
- 'better facilities such as a drinks vending machine'

DETAILED INSPECTION FINDINGS

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

Grade 4

Strengths

- good links with external organisations

Weaknesses

- inadequate strategy for literacy and numeracy support
- insufficient use of data
- weak strategic planning
- inadequate measures to monitor the quality of training and assessment

31. NOVA Training has developed good links with external organisations. The operations director sits at the board of many local training groups and learning partnerships. Through these links, NOVA Training has benefited from accessing best practice within other providers such as improvements on the learners' induction. These links have also benefited the learners directly. For example, one of the partnerships supplies mentoring services on personal and social issues to NOVA Training's learners. Through NOVA Training's good links in the community, some E2E learners have been able to develop personal skills at local community centres by mixing with other social groups through engaging activities. NOVA Training has also developed successful links with local schools, offering tasters and trying to engage young people at risk of exclusion.

32. Internal communications are satisfactory. NOVA Training holds monthly operations meetings with all staff. At these meetings, issues such as health and safety, and learners' feedback are discussed. The provider also communicates with staff on a monthly basis through a newsletter highlighting information on issues such as learners' achievements. NOVA Training is setting up the use of the company intranet for communication purposes, but three centres have no access to the system yet.

33. The company's strategy to meet the literacy, numeracy and language skills development needs of the learners is ineffective. This weakness was highlighted at NOVA Training's reinspection in 2004. However, the strategy is still incomplete and has not been fully implemented yet. The management of additional literacy, numeracy and language support is unsatisfactory. Provision of support varies across the organisation, and is unsatisfactory in business administration. The company's skills for life strategy does not clearly identify learners' entitlement to support or how staff will be trained to provide additional learning support. Skills for life is the government's strategy on training in literacy, numeracy and the use of language. Many staff do not have the knowledge and experience to ensure that support meets individual additional needs. Where support is received, the effect on the learner is not monitored. A recent staff learning plan highlights the company's planned development in this area, but NOVA Training has no strategy to provide language support. The company sometimes makes use of other local providers to support learners' needs, but the processes for arranging this support are not clearly identified.

34. Staff do not use data to analyse achievement and retention of learners or to guide the development of programmes. Only one person in the company is able to analyse and interpret data. This information is not shared or used strategically to develop and improve the provision. Some tutors are not fully knowledgeable about the performance trends in their own areas of learning. During inspection, some inspectors experienced difficulty obtaining basic data, such as the number of learners in current programmes. Although some equality of opportunity data is analysed, this is not used to support management and staff decision-making.

35. The provider's strategic planning is weak. NOVA Training has a high-level strategy designed by the managing director which clearly highlights the organisation's objectives for the next five years. The strategy is disseminated into different plans aimed at delivering the long-term objectives. However, there is no coherent link between these plans and some of them do not focus on what they are initially set out to achieve. The business plan contains objectives that are too large and these are not broken down into measurable, specific actions. The marketing plan is designed to deliver the business plan, but it only covers activities targeting the participation of learners according to their gender and ethnic origin. Most of the existing plans within the organisation do not have measurable outcomes or meaningful, clear actions. Often, reviewing actions do not match the planned outcomes.

Equality of opportunity

Contributory grade 3

36. Arrangements for equality of opportunity are satisfactory, having been judged as good at the previous inspection. NOVA Training has policies and procedures covering equality of opportunity, harassment and complaints. The equal opportunities policy is made available to all staff and learners and displayed throughout NOVA Training's premises. All staff are responsible for ensuring that equality of opportunity is demonstrated in the principles and practice of the organisation.

37. Equality of opportunity is covered satisfactorily at induction and during teaching. It is reinforced during lessons at the centre, and assessors check the learners' understanding at reviews. Issues arising in lessons are dealt with immediately.

38. NOVA Training takes positive action to create an inclusive learning environment. Equality of opportunity is adequately promoted to under-represented groups, and leaflets are available on request in other languages. Effective use is made of links with the local community, community groups and providers to widen participation. In particular, the provider works closely with local schools, pupil referral units and hospital services to provide education and training for 14 to 16 year olds. It uses community links to identify appropriate placements for learners.

39. Equality and diversity training takes place twice a year. Most staff have a good understanding of equality of opportunity. However, training is not systematically planned to ensure that all aspects of equality and diversity are covered. Staff do not receive training on the child protection policy, or for other issues relating to child protection. At the time of the inspection there was no named person with responsibility for the child protection policy.

40. Learners have a good understanding of issues relating to equality and diversity, and most understand their own roles and responsibilities. Learners are aware of what action

NOVA TRAINING

to take if they are treated inappropriately. Most learners know how to use the complaints procedures and NOVA Training has effectively resolved the few complaints it has received.

41. Access to training areas for people with disabilities is satisfactory. All premises have been audited to check compliance with the Disability Discrimination Act 1995. Most buildings are accessible to learners with restricted mobility. A few rooms have too little space to allow a wheelchair to be moved easily. NOVA Training outlines its planned changes to the premises in its 2006-07 business plan and has completed some alterations. It has not completed a detailed financial analysis of the costs of the alterations.

42. The amount of data that NOVA Training collects relating to learners' ethnicity, additional learning needs and progression is satisfactory. The provider has carried out some analysis of this data. However, it does not use the data consistently to contribute to marketing, target-setting and to support management and staff decision-making.

43. Monitoring of equality of opportunity is adequate. NOVA Training provides all employers with information on equality and diversity. Employers' policies are checked and their responsibilities explained when a placement is being established. Equality of opportunity is systematically reviewed at learners' review meetings.

Quality improvement

Contributory grade 4

44. Since the reinspection in January 2004, managers at NOVA Training have taken appropriate steps to rectify some of the key weaknesses identified. They have appointed a member of staff with specific responsibility for health and safety, who has improved and updated a number of practices and policies. Health and safety arrangements within the company are now satisfactory. The rate of retention on the re-started motor vehicle programme is good. Staff have a clearer understanding of quality improvement. Several of them have taken or are working towards training qualifications.

45. The company's approach to monitoring and improving the quality of training is insufficiently coherent. The quality of provision varies significantly across the three areas of learning inspected. The good practice among the preparation for life and work tutors, who share ideas and strategies and carry out joint teaching, is not replicated across other areas of learning. The recently implemented system for observing learning sessions is not yet operating effectively. Those carrying out the observations are not given adequate guidance or preparation. Although the observations are graded, there are no grading criteria or guidelines to ensure consistency of judgements. Following observations, tutors receive feedback, but this is not built in to their development plan or used to help them improve their performance. Managers do not analyse the observation grades over a period of time to measure any overall improvements in teaching and learning, or to identify key areas for further improvement. Arrangements for internal verification are incomplete and the policy and procedures supporting it are unclear. Insufficient assessors' and standardisation meetings are held across the centres. Assessment practice in one area of learning is weak.

46. NOVA Training's managers gather learners' and employers' feedback regularly, using an electronic system which provides a brief analysis of the information. However, they do not use this data effectively to identify key priorities for quality improvement, or to analyse the effect of actions taken.

47. The new quality improvement framework, implemented in 2005, lists a number of activities to be reviewed during the year. It appropriately places increased focus on improving the quality of the learners' experience. However, key aspects of quality improvement, such as internal verification and self-assessment, are omitted from the framework. It is unclear how the framework itself is to be reviewed, or how it will bring about improvement.

48. The self-assessment process is not sufficiently coherent. The activities leading to the production of the annual report, and the timescales within which these should be carried out, are insufficiently clear. Not all staff are involved in the process, and some have insufficient understanding of the grades, judgements and actions required to bring about improvement in the current report. Inadequate emphasis is placed on the views of learners and employers. The report itself is insufficiently analytical, and does not make effective use of performance data. It does not identify several of the key weaknesses found during inspection. NOVA Training's development plan does not include specific, measurable actions to deal with all of the identified weaknesses.

AREAS OF LEARNING

Engineering and manufacturing technologies

Grade 3

Contributory areas:	Number of learners	Contributory grade
Motor vehicle Apprenticeships for young people	22	3 3

49. NOVA Training has 22 apprentices in motor vehicle engineering. All learners are employed in companies serving the motor vehicle industry. Off-the-job training is carried out by NOVA Training at one of two of its training centres, with learners attending for one day a week. Assessment and progress reviews are carried out in the workplace by visiting assessors from NOVA Training. Some learners have progressed from an E2E programme onto the motor vehicle apprenticeship. A learner coach, a centre manager and two assessors support learners in this area of learning.

Motor vehicle

Strengths

- good support for learners

Weaknesses

- poor internal verification

Achievement and standards

50. The current contract for motor vehicle training began in 2005, and it is too early to make a judgement on achievement. Rates of retention are high, however, and learners are making satisfactory progress in all aspects of their framework.

51. Learners produce work of a satisfactory standard and develop skills at a level appropriate to their qualification. Staff recognised that learners' progress through key skills units was slow, and recently employed a consultant to support learners in gathering key skills evidence. All new learners now start key skills work at the start of their programme.

The quality of provision

52. Tutors and learners have an effective and productive relationship. Learners find NOVA Training's staff approachable and supportive. Learners receive help and clear direction with a range of issues, including coursework, finding workplaces, and personal issues. Staff are active in finding learners new placements, either to broaden their experience or if the previous work placement was not suitable. Learners' literacy and numeracy skills support needs are appropriately evaluated at initial assessment, and suitable support is given, primarily by vocational tutors. A learner identified as dyslexic was supported by a tutor who carried out research with the learner to identify presentation styles that would help their understanding. NOVA Training's staff respond

rapidly to requests for work-based assessments for the NVQ as specific tasks and practice opportunities occur in the learners' workplaces. Assessors carry out progress reviews every four to six weeks, providing direct learning and resolving any concerns that learners may have. Learners' induction is appropriately detailed. Individual learning plans contain the outcomes of initial assessments and suitable qualification and skills development targets and goals. Learners understand the requirements of the apprenticeship, including work experience and evidence gathering.

53. Teaching and learning are satisfactory. Learners attend the training centre one day a week to complete background knowledge and practical sessions to support the NVQ general knowledge, technical certificate and key skills qualification requirements. Training sessions are appropriately planned and presented. In one practical session observed, tutors did not take opportunities to reinforce with learners the importance of safe and sensible working practices. The monitoring and recording of learners' achievements and progress reviews are adequate and use the awarding body's documents where relevant.

Leadership and management

54. NOVA Training's links and communication with employers are effective. Employers are well informed about learners' progress and about which areas the learners need to focus on to complete their framework. They support learners well and provide useful advice and guidance as required.

55. Resources at the training centre are adequate. Vocational staff have suitable skills, experience and qualifications. Appropriate personal and professional development opportunities are identified through the staff appraisal process and staff are supported by managers to take advantage of these.

56. Learners are aware of the importance of equality of opportunity, and of their rights and responsibilities. Tutors discuss equality of opportunity at reviews, although not in sufficient detail to further improve learners' understanding. Generally, employers have an adequate awareness of equality, although inappropriate material was displayed on the walls of one work placement.

57. Some staff are involved in the self-assessment process. Most staff contributed to the initial development of the self-assessment report, but their involvement was not included in the revision throughout the year.

58. After the previous inspection, where health and safety was a key weakness in the motor vehicle provision, managers appointed a health and safety specialist who implemented a number of improvements to the company's health and safety arrangements, including updating policies and procedures, monitoring resources and carrying out 'mini-inspections'. Health and safety practice is now satisfactory.

59. Internal verification is ineffective. Insufficient forward planning takes place, although records are kept of internal verification which has already taken place. Feedback from internal verification does not give assessors clear guidance about how they need to improve their practice. There is insufficient standardisation or sharing of practice among motor vehicle assessors. The outcomes of external verification are not routinely shared with tutors. The standard of assessment is generally satisfactory, although the range of evidence in some learners' portfolios is too narrow.

Preparation for life and work**Grade 2**

Contributory areas:	Number of learners	Contributory grade
<i>Employability training</i>		2
Entry to Employment	88	2

60. The E2E programme has 88 learners at various stages of learning. Sixteen of the learners have disabilities, mainly asthma and specific learning difficulties including dyslexia. Young people are either referred by local Connexions personal advisers or are self-referred. Recruitment to the E2E programme is flexible and learners can join at any time. There are four centre managers, 14 tutors, learner coaches and support staff and two placement officers who work to secure employment placements for learners. Progress reviews are carried out by NOVA Training's staff.

Employability training*Strengths*

- good development of personal and communication skills
- very effective work placements
- well-focused individual support for learners

Weaknesses

- inadequate recording of reviews
- inadequate planning of some aspects of the E2E programme

Achievement and standards

61. Learners develop good personal and communications skills. Many learners have poor social and communications skills when they first enrol on the E2E programme. There is a focus on developing communications skills and encouraging learners to work together during the induction period. Learners attend a very effective one-day outdoor activity centre where planning, problem solving and teamwork are an integral part of a good range of practical activities. Learners respond very well to the demands of the course. They confidently apply new skills learnt in training activities and in the workplace. NOVA Training uses a local community centre where learners have learnt to cook successfully. During 2005-06, 46 learners have gained a foundation certificate in health and safety in the workplace.

62. There is good progression into employment. Learners develop good levels of self-confidence and their self-esteem increases as they gain additional employability skills. Over the past three years, 66 per cent of learners have successfully entered work after leaving the programme. Retention rates have improved to 93 per cent for 2003-04. Attendance rates are satisfactory and staff have appropriate strategies for dealing with poor attendance and punctuality.

63. Overall progression into positive outcomes such as further education, training or

employment is satisfactory. Fifty-eight per cent of learners in 2003-04 progressed on to a positive outcome. For 2004-05 the rate is currently 50 per cent, with 28 learners still in learning. For the current intake, 60 learners are still in learning with the progression rate currently being 32 per cent.

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

LSC funded work-based learning																	
Entry to Employment	2005-06		2004-05		2003-04		2002-03		2001-02								
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	
Number of starts	146		239	100	191	100	42	100	2	100							
Progression ¹	47		120	50	111	58	20	48	2	100							
Achieved objectives ²	7		29	12	27	14	17	40	2	100							
Still in learning	60		28	12	0	0	0	0	0	0							

1. Measured in terms of learners' movement to further training, education or employment, during or after their training

2. These being the key objectives identified for each learner while on E2E

The quality of provision

64. There are very effective work placements, with many employers having long-established links with NOVA Training. Employers are aware that not all of the learners that they take on work placements will be suitable. They are very committed to helping learners evaluate the suitability of the work for themselves by giving them the opportunity to try it out. A good range of placements is available, including motor vehicle venues, business administration, retail and warehousing. NOVA Training is highly flexible in arranging taster work placements for those learners who are not sure of the type of work they wish to pursue. The communication between employers and staff at NOVA Training is very effective, with employers often contacting the company when they have work-placement vacancies.

65. Learners receive good support for learners. Access to counselling for help with personal issues is available both from experienced staff and from the learners' personal tutor. NOVA Training's staff know the learners well and support them appropriately. Learners are also referred to external counselling agencies and a local help centre when appropriate. Employers are very supportive and encourage learners to communicate with them if they are experiencing problems. Links with local Connexions personal advisers are well established.

66. Teaching and learning are satisfactory. In the sessions observed, all of which were graded satisfactory or better, learning session plans had clear aims and objectives which were shared with learners. In the best sessions, tutors motivate and inspire learners, and encourage them to participate very effectively in activities. Learners clearly enjoy these sessions. However, in a minority of sessions, tutors do not wait for learners to answer their questions. In one practical motor vehicle session, tutors did not take opportunities to reinforce the importance of safe working practices.

67. Literacy and numeracy support is satisfactory for learners on the E2E programme. All learners undergo an initial screening test and diagnostic testing during their initial induction period. While learners do receive support to improve their skills, there is

insufficient recording of this progress. Some staff have recently taken a short training course in how to establish literacy and numeracy development in learning situations. However, in the sessions observed during the inspection, tutors did not always take opportunities to develop learners' literacy and numeracy skills.

68. The recording of reviews is inadequate. Learners' reviews take place regularly and most employers are involved in workplace reviews. However, some of the review documents are incomplete, with some sections not completed fully, and dates and signatures not always included. Targets are often too general, making it difficult to measure short-term progress. There is poor recording of the planned activities for learners in their activity plans. Links to the content of reviews and targets from initial assessment and individual programme records are not always clear.

Leadership and management

69. The promotion of equality and diversity is satisfactory for learners on the E2E programme. Issues that arise are acknowledged and used very well for discussions during teaching sessions. However, some inappropriate comments made by learners were not challenged.

70. Resources are satisfactory. Learners who are conducting jobsearch activities and using the internet for research purposes have adequate access to computers.

71. Planning of the E2E programme is inadequate. NOVA Training has no overall plan or policy that relates to the aims and objectives of the programme. Although there is a satisfactory timetable for the six-week induction programme, there is no overall curriculum that clearly shows learners' entitlement while on the programme. There is no programme review to assess adequately the quality of the programme and plan for further improvements.

72. Staff are not sufficiently involved in the self-assessment process. They are asked for their opinions on issues but there is no formal involvement of all E2E staff. The most recent self-assessment report does not identify the weaknesses found during the inspection.

Business administration and law**Grade 4**

Contributory areas:	Number of learners	Contributory grade
Administration Apprenticeships for young people	14	4 4

73. Currently 14 learners are following programmes in business administration and law. Learners are on apprenticeship programmes that include a level 2 NVQ, key skills qualifications in communication and application of number, and a technical certificate. Twelve apprentices are on the business administration programme with the remaining two on customer service programmes. Two assessors facilitate the programme. One works in this role full time and the other has other duties within the company. A consultant internal verifier is currently supporting the assessors. All assessment, training and learning support takes place at the employers' premises.

Administration*Strengths*

- effective learner-led reviews

Weaknesses

- inadequate literacy and numeracy support
- weak internal verification
- poor assessment

Achievement and standards

74. Success rates show an improving trend. Achievement on all programmes is satisfactory. In the current year all nine apprentices who started the programme are still in learning, and most are making adequate progress. Learners are well regarded by their employers and carry out their workplace responsibilities competently. Most gain confidence and improve their communication skills as a result of their training. Learners' portfolios are adequately presented and contain a suitable range of evidence.

NOVA TRAINING

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	6	83	46	33	28
		timely	4	75	30	0	18
	2004-05	overall	1	0	47	0	31
		timely	2	50	35	0	23
Apprenticeships	2003-04	overall	37	70	51	59	37
		timely	32	34	25	28	18
	2004-05	overall	18	61	56	61	45
		timely	18	56	35	56	28
NVQ training for young	2003-04	overall	18	39	48	0	0
		timely	19	42	35	0	0
	2004-05	overall	7	71	57	0	0
		timely	5	60	43	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

75. Reviews are well structured, and learners, employers and tutors all participate effectively. All parties are aware of what the learners have achieved and what remains to be done. Learners set their own review targets, in consultation with assessors and employers. They are supported in working towards these by their employers. Reviewers check learners' understanding of equality of opportunity, health and safety, and rights and responsibilities by discussing case studies or scenarios with the learners.

76. Learners receive appropriate personal support from assessors and employers. Learners' job roles correspond well to their learning programmes. Workplaces are well resourced and provide adequate learning opportunities. The standard of on- and off-the-job training is satisfactory. Learners have access to up-to-date equipment and learning materials. Staff are appropriately qualified with the necessary commercial experience. They provide learners with appropriate advice and guidance when required.

77. Literacy and numeracy support for learners is inadequate. The assessors who provide it lack experience and qualifications in literacy and numeracy teaching. They rely too much on using workbooks, and do not always tailor support to learners' individual needs. Learners receive insufficient feedback on their progress and on the quality of their work, and their mistakes are not always corrected or discussed with them. The type and level of support received is not recorded in sufficient detail, and does not always accurately reflect the results of diagnostic testing. Learners' targets do not make specific reference to literacy and numeracy. Literacy and numeracy support is not always provided in a timely manner. In one case, a need identified seven months ago has yet to be met.

Leadership and management

78. Learners display a satisfactory knowledge of equality of opportunity issues. They are fully aware of the complaints and disciplinary procedures, and know who to contact if they have any concerns.

79. Some aspects of assessment practice are poorly planned and managed. Assessors visit learners frequently, but do not give them sufficient guidance about the need to complete NVQ units, and the evidence required to do this. In some cases, learners still have uncompleted NVQ units for which they only need additional evidence for one performance criteria to achieve. In such cases, the outstanding evidence is not targeted during assessments.

80. Not enough internal verification takes place. Eleven internal verifications were planned during March and April but only six took place. The other five have not been re-scheduled. There is insufficient standardisation and sharing of good practice. Internal verifiers' feedback lacks detail and is not helpful in showing assessors what they need to do to improve. Internal verification has not picked up the weaknesses in assessment planning. Managers recognise the problems with internal verification, some of which are the result of staffing difficulties. They cited the weakness in the self-assessment report, and have taken recent steps to improve the situation.

81. The self-assessment report correctly identifies that the quality of business administration training is unsatisfactory, but does not find all the weaknesses identified by inspectors.

