

INSPECTION REPORT

EEF West Midlands Technology Centre

14 October 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. EEF West Midlands Technology Centre (EEF centre), which operates as an unincorporated body governed by its constitution and rules, is a specialist work-based learning provider. EEF centre has been owned and operated by the EEF West Midlands Association since 1999. The association is a membership-based organisation that represents engineering and manufacturing employers across the United Kingdom and provides a range of support services to the member companies.
2. EEF centre mainly contracts with Birmingham and Solihull Learning and Skills Council (LSC) for apprenticeship and advanced apprenticeship programmes and the Employer Training Programmes (ETP). Most of its learners are on apprenticeship programmes in engineering and manufacturing technologies with a small number who are on construction, planning and the built environment programmes, and a few who are on retail and commercial enterprise training. Due to the small number of the learners on these latter programmes, the training was not inspected. EEF centre also has 35 learners in engineering on an ETP contracts with Shropshire LSC and Birmingham and Solihull LSC. EEF centre offers a range of bespoke programmes for employers.
3. EEF centre is accredited as an assessment centre by three awarding bodies and is currently seeking approval from a fourth. EEF centre is also accredited to deliver the advanced apprenticeship scheme. It has been accredited with the Investors in People standard since 1998. Investors in People is a national standard for improving an organisation's performance through its people.
4. There are 22 staff who are involved with training, of whom, 20 are full time. EEF centre has a general manager who oversees the day-to-day operation of the centre. Four staff who take responsibility for different aspects of training report to the general manager.
5. EEF centre operates within the West Midlands. The proportion of people from minority ethnic groups is 11 per cent, compared with 9.1 per cent nationally.

OVERALL EFFECTIVENESS

Grade 3

6. **The overall effectiveness of the provision is satisfactory.** Training is good in engineering and manufacturing technologies and leadership and management, equality of opportunity and quality improvement are satisfactory.
7. **The inspection team was broadly confident in the reliability of the self-assessment process.** EEF centre has an effective self-assessment process which is managed by the general manager. The self-assessment process involves all staff, the senior association staff and the views of the learners and employers. The report uses learners' performance data well to evaluate the provision, however a significant part of the report is too descriptive. The weaknesses in all aspects of leadership and management were given less significance than that identified by inspectors.

8. The provider has demonstrated that it is in a good position to make improvements.

EEF centre accurately identified most of its weaknesses and has developed detailed and very clear action plans which are being implemented. The quality assurance manager leads the implementation of the action plans and quality improvements, with the support of the management team. The association has a very strong commitment to EEF centre and supports it well. EEF centre has a range of initiatives to improve its recruitment, retention and achievement rates, but the effect of these policies is too early to assess.

KEY CHALLENGES FOR EEF WEST MIDLANDS TECHNOLOGY CENTRE:

- continue to improve retention and achievement rates
- improve the use of management information system
- develop and implement effective quality assurance arrangements
- effectively co-ordinate on- and off-the-job training
- effectively review the learners’ progress
- further develop and implement effective management of subcontractors
- increase the number of learners from under-represented groups
- improve the learners’ understanding of equality and diversity

GRADES

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

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

Engineering and manufacturing technologies			2
Contributory areas:	Number of learners	Contributory grade	
Engineering			2
Apprenticeships for young people	272		2
Employer training pilot	35		2

ABOUT THE INSPECTION

9. Two inspectors spent eight days reporting and grading the engineering provision and all aspects of leadership and management.

Number of inspectors	2
Number of inspection days	8
Number of learners interviewed	43
Number of staff interviewed	14
Number of employers interviewed	13
Number of locations/sites/learning centres visited	1
Number of visits	1

KEY FINDINGS

Achievements and standards

10. Achievements rates on the ETP programme have averaged 75 per cent in the past four years. However, approximately 60 per cent of the learners achieved the qualification after their intended completion date. For these learners, the funding end date was used as the intended completion date rather than a date based on initial assessment results.

11. **The retention rates for learners on the level 2 engineering programmes are low.** Of the 135 learners who have started since 2002, 49 have left early.

The quality of provision

12. **EEF centre provides good training for learners.** Most employers provide a detailed learning plan to ensure that learners cover all areas of the engineering businesses.

13. **Many of the learners complete additional qualifications** that are paid for by the employers. Some also progress on to complete higher national certificate qualifications and some even progress to engineering degrees.

14. **EEF centre celebrates the learners' achievements well.** The awards ceremony motivates them to do well and they are pleased to have their achievements and progress recognised. Learners on ETP programmes are also presented with their qualifications at organised events.

15. **Resources are good.** Training workshops contain industry-standard machinery which is very well maintained. Training materials are produced well and interactive whiteboards are used in classroom areas. Modern technology is used for computer aided design and manufacturing training purposes.

16. **There is little co-ordination between the level 3 technical certificate teaching and**

the on-the-job training. The learners do not have adequate opportunity to reinforce their understanding of engineering principles.

17. **The purpose of the review meeting is unclear.** During the meetings, there is insufficient monitoring of the learners' progress against the individual learning plans. The plans are not always sufficiently reviewed and updated. Learners and the employers are not provided with clear information about progress. During the meetings, the learners' understanding of equality is insufficiently reinforced and developed.

Leadership and management

18. Since the inspection in 2003, EEF centre has experienced a significant phase of organisational change. **It has initiated good actions to improve its operational management.** It has fully reviewed its staffing and its policies and procedures. Based on this work, a significant number of actions have been initiated to improve the operational management and the training.

19. **EEF centre and its learners significantly benefit from very effective strategic and operational support from the association.** This additional resource is used to improve the engineering and computing facilities.

20. **The monitoring and management of the subcontracted provision is insufficient.** The revised documents do not set sufficient quality standards or targets. They do not clearly indicate how the contract will be monitored and managed. A significant number of the colleges have not signed the new documents.

21. **Equality and diversity are not sufficiently promoted and reinforced.** During the review meetings assessors monitor the learners' knowledge of equality matters by asking if the learner has experienced any problems.

22. **The quality assurance system is not sufficiently developed** to identify opportunities for improvements in a timely manner.

Leadership and management

Strengths

- good actions to improve operational management
- very effective strategic and operational support from the association

Weaknesses

- insufficient management of subcontractors
- insufficient development of quality assurance arrangements
- insufficient promotion of equality of opportunity

Engineering and manufacturing technologies

Engineering

Grade 2

Strengths

- good achievements on the ETP programmes
- well-planned training in the workplace
- good training at the EEF training centre
- good celebration of achievement
- good resources at EEF centre
- supportive and committed employers

Weaknesses

- low retention rates for level 2 learners
- insufficient co-ordination of level 3 technical certificate and workplace learning
- insufficiently clear progress reviews

WHAT LEARNERS LIKE ABOUT EEF WEST MIDLANDS TECHNOLOGY CENTRE:

- relevant training
- good opportunities to develop skills
- lots of help and support from assessors
- good training provided at the EEF training centre
- well-organised course and simple paperwork for the NVQ
- finding the background knowledge questionnaires helpful

WHAT LEARNERS THINK EEF WEST MIDLANDS TECHNOLOGY CENTRE COULD IMPROVE:

- more support to deal with college issues
- not to have to refer to the instructors as Sir or Mr.
- provide training centres in other locations
- responding quicker to queries and issues

DETAILED INSPECTION FINDINGS

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

Grade 3

Strengths

- good actions to improve operational management
- very effective strategic and operational support from the association

Weaknesses

- insufficient management of subcontractors
- insufficient development of quality assurance arrangements
- insufficient promotion of equality of opportunity

23. Since the inspection in 2003, EEF centre has experienced a significant phase of organisational change. Following the appointment of a new general manager in June 2004, the operation of EEF centre were fully reviewed. Based on this work, a significant number of actions were initiated to improve the operational management and training. These include the formation of a management team with clear roles and responsibilities and the appointment of a key-skills co-ordinator and staff with administration responsibilities. The revised job descriptions are used well to monitor the performance of staff, and effective and prompt action is taken when problems with performance arise. There are now regular meetings to discuss the learners' retention and achievement rates. Data is used more systematically to monitor the learners' progress. EEF centre responds well to the LSC and the employers' requirements. It has recently supported a significant number of learners who were unlikely to complete their training when a major local car manufacture closed. EEF centre has secured employment for 82 of the 86 learners who experienced this difficulty. However, some of the actions, such as the appointment of a monitoring officer in July 2005 are too recent and their effect cannot be fully assessed. There are also examples where the implementation of some revised policies, such as the development of quality assurance system, has been too slow.

24. EEF centre and its learners significantly benefit from very effective strategic and operational support from the association. The association is fully committed to supporting the development and progress of EEF centre through providing financial stability and good advice. For example, it provides financial resources each year to modernise the training rooms and the extensive workshop facilities. EEF centre receives financial management, personnel services and marketing support from the association. This additional resource is used well to benefit the learners through improved engineering and computing facilities. EEF centre benefits from the association's well co-ordinated and well-resourced strategy to promote engineering to schools and the community through a wide range of good projects. EEF centre's manager is supported well by an advisory board who are also members of the association. They have a wide range of current industrial and commercial experience which is used well to develop EEF centre. Strategic direction is reflected well in EEF centre's business plan. There are clear targets for increased rates of recruitment, retention and achievement. Staff have a good understanding of the priorities and are very clear on how they contribute towards achieving these.

25. Learners' literacy and numeracy needs are effectively identified during their induction. The learners who need support receive it from one of the staff during the off-the-job training. None of the staff are suitably qualified or trained to provide this support, but the learners' progress has not been adversely affected.

26. Staff have well-defined job specifications which include specific targets for the learners' performance. They have an annual appraisal during which their performance of the previous 12 months is discussed, and challenges and training needs are identified. Staff have attended a wide range of training events to improve their knowledge on subjects such as quality assurance, health and safety and national vocational qualification (NVQ) training.

27. Resource management is effective. Staff and equipment is deployed well to enhance the learners' experience. Learners have good opportunities to work on a wide range of industrial equipment with their employers and at EEF centre. For example, the learners develop good skills using industry standard computer software for designing components. EEF centre is in the process of providing additional teaching rooms to enable learners to study at a more convenient time. Attention to health and safety is effective.

28. EEF centre uses data adequately to monitor the learners' progress, retention and achievement rates and the learners' gender and ethnicity. The information is collected through a database and progress documents and charts. While this arrangement is adequate, there is no overview of learners' progress for trend analysis. This was also identified at the previous inspection.

29. EEF centre subcontracts the training for the technical certificate to 17 colleges across a number of regions. At the time of the inspection 81 per cent of the training is subcontracted to the colleges, and the remaining 19 per cent is provided by EEF centre's staff. A range of actions has been taken to improve this aspect of the training. These include providing training at its own facilities using one of the subcontractor's staff, transferring learners to new subcontractors and developing new policies and procedures. It uses the colleges' inspection reports systematically to make subcontracting decisions. However, the monitoring and management of the subcontracted provision is insufficient. The new documents do not set sufficient quality standards or targets, nor do they clearly indicate how the contract will be monitored and managed. A significant number of the colleges have not signed the new documents. EEF centre does not regularly receive information about the performance of its learners from the colleges. Reviews of progress with the colleges' representatives has been on an annual basis which is too infrequent. The staff have been very responsive to the learners' concerns, but there are some learners who do not find the staff responsive enough. Management of subcontractors is identified as a weakness in the current self-assessment report and the development plan.

Equality of opportunity

Contributory grade 3

30. EEF centre sets clear targets for participation by under-represented groups across its programmes. It relies extensively on the well-developed marketing and promotional activities of the association which promotes engineering training opportunities to the community. EEF centre has developed effective links with schools and promotes visits to its facilities to challenge stereotypes and provide a more realistic understanding of employment opportunities in engineering and manufacturing to potential learners. Participation rates for minority ethnic groups are adequate at 7.4 per cent, but this has declined from 18 per cent at the previous inspection. The participation of women has also

declined from 10 per cent at the previous inspection to approximately 3 per cent. The association and EEF centre work very hard to promote the benefits of fair employment practices and offer a range of good recruitment awareness seminars. However, the proportion of minority ethnic learners who gain employment and progress to the advanced apprenticeship continues to be low at 4.7 per cent.

31. EEF centre's policy and the procedures for equality are up to date and effective. There is a clear framework for complaints, bullying and harassment. However, some learners feel it is not relevant to their needs. EEF centre's staff are aware of the equality problems which some learners experience and take effective actions to remedy them. The managers use ethnicity and gender data well to monitor the relative performance of the learners.

32. There are adequate arrangements to support learners who have a learning disability or restricted mobility. However, none of the staff have received training to identify or support learners who have dyslexia. Some arrangements exist to support learners through an external organisation. Currently, none of the learners have physical or mobility difficulties. While there are some access restrictions, there are adequate alternative arrangements.

33. Learners are trained in equality and diversity during their induction, and mostly gain an adequate understanding. However, equality and diversity are not sufficiently promoted and reinforced during their training programmes or at the progress review meetings. During the review meetings, assessors monitor the learners' knowledge of equality by asking if the learners have experienced any problems. Equality is not adequately explored and discussions are not detailed. Some learners are not confident enough to challenge equality problems at work or do not recognise their significance. In one employer's premises, inappropriate posters were on display and were not challenged by the learner, the employer or EEF centre's staff.

Quality improvement

Contributory grade 3

34. Quality improvement activities are satisfactory. The managers and staff respond well when improvement opportunities or weaknesses are identified. Since the previous inspection, the achievement rates have generally improved, and some of the weaknesses such as the insufficiency of supervision in the workshop have been resolved. Better use is now made of learners' performance information to improve the quality of provision. Formal observation of training is systematically carried out, even though some are not sufficiently thorough. EEF centre collects feedback from learners and employers directly through questionnaires and more recently through an external organisation. The feedback is analysed in detail, common themes are identified and actions are planned to make improvements. A quality assurance manager has been appointed to oversee the implementation of a new quality assurance system and to monitor improvements. However, the full effect of this appointment is too early to assess.

35. The annual self-assessment process includes the views of staff, learners, employers and senior staff from the association. The self-assessment report is detailed, and includes a number of the strengths and weaknesses identified at inspection. The report uses learners' performance data well to evaluate the provision, however a significant part of the report is too descriptive. The weaknesses in all aspects of leadership and management were given less significance in the report than those identified by inspectors.

36. After the previous inspection, EEF centre re-evaluated its quality assurance

EEF WEST MIDLANDS TECHNOLOGY CENTRE

arrangements and significantly altered its policies and procedures. Some aspects of the revised quality assurance arrangements are complete, but the system is not sufficiently developed and implemented to identify opportunities for improvements in a timely manner.

AREAS OF LEARNING

Engineering and manufacturing technologies

Grade 2

Contributory areas:	Number of learners	Contributory grade
Engineering		2
Apprenticeships for young people	272	2
Employer training pilot	35	2

37. There are 229 advanced apprentices, 40 apprentices and one NVQ learner, all studying towards engineering qualifications. Two learners are also working towards a manufacturing apprenticeship. Thirty-seven advanced apprentices from pre-2002-03 are not shown in the tables, neither is the one NVQ learner. All of the advanced apprentices are employed at one of the association member companies which are located mainly in the West Midlands. Apprentices are paid a training allowance by EEF centre and are looking to gain employment at some stage of their training. EEF centre's staff arrange interviews with local employers so that the learners can gain employment following their initial training. First-year apprentices attend off-the-job training at EEF centre's training facilities.

38. The general manager is supported by 21 trainers, assessors and administrators. The level 2 part of the apprenticeship framework is planned to be completed over one year at EEF centre. All learners attend either a subcontracted college or EEF centre for the technical certificate training. Assessment for the level 3 is carried out in the workplace by EEF centre assessors who visit the learners every three to six weeks. There are 35 adult learners on ETP working towards manufacturing qualifications at their workplace. The assessors visit these learners about every three weeks to assess them against criteria for the qualification. Learners' background knowledge is also assessed as well as their competence in carrying out tasks.

Engineering

Grade 2

Strengths

- good achievements on the ETP programmes
- well-planned training in the workplace
- good training at the EEF training centre
- good celebration of achievement
- good resources at EEF centre
- supportive and committed employers

Weaknesses

- low retention rates for level 2 learners
- insufficient co-ordination of level 3 technical certificate and workplace learning
- insufficiently clear progress reviews

Achievement and standards

39. Achievements rates for the ETP programme have averaged 75 per cent over the past four years. The number of early leavers is satisfactory at 17 per cent. However, 60 per cent of learners achieve after their intended completion date. The funding end date was used as the intended completion date rather than a date based on initial assessment results.

40. The overall achievement and retention rates for advanced apprentices since 2002-03 is satisfactory. Five per cent of learners have achieved a qualification so far and 192 are still in learning. Of the 233 learners who have started since 2002-03, only 30 have left early. The written work produced for the technical certificate and NVQ portfolios is good.

41. The overall achievement rate for apprentices over the past four years is satisfactory at 33 per cent. Thirty per cent of the learners are still in learning. However, the retention rates for learners on the level 2 engineering programmes are low. Of the 135 learners who started between 2002 and 2005, 49 have left before completing their qualifications. Many of the learners on this course are not employed and leave the course for better paid work without training. EEF centre has recently introduced new strategies to improve the situation. Following feedback from learners about the programme, the staff have reduced the time spent working in the different sections of the training workshops to increase the pace of training. Unemployed learners are now included in groups of employed learners so that they can find out more about the benefits of employer involvement. Canvassing employers for job vacancies is now done earlier and jobs are advertised on a noticeboard. However, It is too early for these actions to have had an effect on retention and achievement rates.

42. EEF centre has taken over the training of 47 learners who have transferred from other training providers. Some of these have left the programme early and this has slightly affected the overall retention and achievement rates.

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	38		72		87		36										
Retained*	0		3		14		2										
Successfully completed	0		0		4		7										
Still in learning	38		67		74		13										

*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	32		33		36		34	100								
Retained*	0		14		25		11	32								
Successfully completed	0		15		21		8	24								
Still in learning	32		6		4		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

LSC funded work-based learning																
Employer training pilot	2005-06		2004-05		2003-04		2002-03									
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Number of starts	5		37		208	100	175	100								
Retained*	0		0		156	75	136	78								
Successfully completed	0		37		156	75	125	71								
Still in learning	5		30		0	0	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

43. EEF centre provides good training for learners. Training is well planned in the workplace and in the EEF centres. The training sessions in the workshop are also good. Most employers provide a detailed learning plan to ensure that learners are trained in all aspects of the engineering businesses. The training is usually divided into blocks of time for learners to gain experience on different aspects of the business. At the end of each block, a progress review is carried out to monitor if the learning objectives have been met. Employers are very supportive and demonstrate a strong commitment to their apprenticeship training. ETP learners receive satisfactory assessment and support in their workplaces. Many apprentices complete additional qualifications that are paid for by the employers, such as residential outdoor pursuit courses to improve teamwork and problem-solving skills. Some of the learners also progress to complete higher national certificate qualifications and some even progress to engineering degrees. Apprentices usually complete two additional units for the NVQ at level 2 which are not needed for the qualification but provide the learners with additional skills for their prospective employment. Learners' key skills are satisfactorily assessed and accredited using evidence from the workplace and from the work carried out at an EEF centre.

44. EEF centre celebrates the learners' achievements. An awards ceremony is held each year to present certificates and also to present apprentice of the year awards. The first prize for the apprentice of the year is a trophy and a significant prize of money. The awards ceremony motivates learners to do well and they are pleased to have their achievements and progress recognised. Learners on ETP programmes are also presented with their qualifications at organised events to celebrate their success.

45. Resources at EEF centre are good. The training workshop contains industry-standard machinery which is very well maintained. Training materials are well produced and

interactive whiteboards are used in classroom areas. Modern technology is used for computer aided design and manufacturing training. Staff have extensive experience of working in the engineering industry and they are also qualified assessors and training instructors. They are respected by learners for their knowledge and experience. They use their knowledge well to make lessons interesting and participative. Learners enjoy the off-the-job training and find the training to be very stimulating. The initial training at the training centre quickly develops their knowledge and skills.

46. The arrangement for supporting learners with literacy and numeracy needs are satisfactory. Most of the learners have achieved satisfactory grades at school in English, mathematics and sciences. Learners are given an initial assessment in literacy and numeracy in addition to the assessment of their aptitude for training in engineering. The entry requirement and the initial assessment often means that very few learners need additional literacy, numeracy or language support. Key skills diagnostic testing occasionally highlights some support needs and this is provided by the assessors, even though none are qualified to provide this support. Learners who have dyslexia are referred to an external organisation which provides guidance to the staff on how to provide this support.

47. There is little co-ordination between the level 3 technical certificate teaching and the on-the-job training. Employers are not given a copy of the college course and the colleges are not given a copy of the planned workplace training. Learners do not benefit from linking background knowledge to practice and are not provided with sufficient opportunity to reinforce their understanding of engineering principles and practices.

48. Progress reviews are carried out more frequently than contractually required. However, the purpose of the review is unclear. The meetings are used to assess the learners' work-based evidence against the NVQ criteria, and employers find this takes a long period of time and do not always attend. During the meetings, there is insufficient monitoring of the learners' progress against the individual learning plans. The plans are not always sufficiently reviewed and updated. Learners and the employers are not given clear information about progress. The learners' understanding of equality is insufficiently reinforced and developed at reviews.

Leadership and management

49. Management of the provision is satisfactory. Staff meet and discuss various aspects of the training programmes on a formal and informal basis. Advanced apprentices are well supported by their employers. The quality of subcontracted training is sometimes inconsistent and some aspects of the management of subcontractors is insufficient. Learners are aware of their rights and responsibilities and there are good working relationships with EEF centre's staff. However, the first-year apprentices are expected to refer to the instructors as Mr. and the instructors also refer to the apprentices as Mr. This promotes a schooling image rather than a realistic work environment. ETP learning and assessment programmes are well organised and the levels of achievement have been high. Mature learners value the opportunity to gain qualifications and enjoy the experience.

50. Learners' views are sought to evaluate the training. Observations of teaching and learning have been introduced, but the comments are not detailed. The self-assessment report is clear and recognises a number of the strengths and weaknesses identified during the inspection.

