

INSPECTION REPORT

CSM Consulting Ltd

31 March 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*

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Contents

Summary

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

Detailed inspection findings

Leadership and management	8
Equality of opportunity	9
Quality improvement	10
Engineering and manufacturing technologies	12
Retail and commercial enterprise	15
Business administration and law	18

INSPECTION REPORT

DESCRIPTION OF THE PROVIDER

1. CSM Consulting Ltd (CSM) is a private training provider which was established in 2003 to offer the employer training pilot (ETP) programme to employed adult learners mainly in the manufacturing and processes industries. It is based in Taunton, Somerset, and contracts with the Swindon and Wiltshire, Berkshire, South Yorkshire, West Yorkshire, Cambridgeshire and Devon and Cornwall Learning and Skills Councils (LSCs). CSM has 25 members of staff including 19 assessors and two lead assessors. It provides training and assessment in manufacturing technologies, warehousing and distribution, administration and business management. A programme in business improvement techniques is delivered in partnership with a subcontractor.

OVERALL EFFECTIVENESS

Grade 2

2. **The overall effectiveness of the provision is good.** CSM's leadership and management are good, and its arrangements for equality of opportunity and quality improvement are satisfactory. Provision is good in engineering and manufacturing technologies, retail and commercial enterprise and business administration and law.

3. **The inspection team was broadly confident in the reliability of the self-assessment process.** CSM's second self-assessment report was produced in January 2006. Staff are involved in the process and learners' and employers' views are captured in the self-assessment report. Many of the judgements in the report are accurate, although inspectors found further weaknesses in the provision. Judgements from the self-assessment process are an integral part of the company's development plans.

4. **The provider has demonstrated that it has sufficient capacity to make improvements.** CSM's approach to quality improvement has been reflected in good retention and achievement rates for learners. CSM reacts quickly to problems to ensure that the good quality of the provision is maintained. However, some of its systems and procedures are new and have not yet been fully implemented.

KEY CHALLENGES FOR CSM CONSULTING LTD:

- implement effective initial assessment
- provide effective literacy, numeracy and language support for learners
- increase the sharing of good practice
- improve the effectiveness of the learners' induction
- accelerate learners' progress
- improve the promotion of equality of opportunity to learners
- maintain the high retention and achievement rates

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		3
Quality improvement		3

Engineering and manufacturing technologies			2
Contributory areas:	Number of learners	Contributory grade	
Manufacturing technologies		2	
Employer training pilot	493	2	

Retail and commercial enterprise			2
Contributory areas:	Number of learners	Contributory grade	
Warehousing and distribution		2	
Employer training pilot	35	2	

Business administration and law			2
Contributory areas:	Number of learners	Contributory grade	
Administration		2	
Employer training pilot	29	2	
Business management		2	
Employer training pilot	48	2	

ABOUT THE INSPECTION

5. All areas of learning offered by CSM were reported on and graded. The engineering and manufacturing technologies, retail and commercial enterprise and business administration and law areas of learning were inspected.

Number of inspectors	6
Number of inspection days	30
Number of learners interviewed	39
Number of staff interviewed	38
Number of employers interviewed	7
Number of locations/sites/learning centres visited	12

KEY FINDINGS

Achievements and standards

6. **Retention and achievement rates are very good** for learners on national vocational qualification (NVQ) programmes in manufacturing operations and warehousing and distribution, and good for learners on the business administration and team leadership programmes.

7. **Learners develop good personal and occupational skills** including effective management and teamworking skills. They also display improved confidence and self-esteem.

8. **Some learners on team leadership and manufacturing technologies programmes make slow progress.** CSM has identified the reasons for this and has carried out work with employers and learners to correct the situation.

The quality of provision

9. Staff provide a **wide range of support** for learners. Assessors are permanently located in one factory and this provides the learners with easy access to support and advice and to aid effective assessment. Learners have access to video cameras and tape recorders, and some learning and assessment materials have been produced in different languages.

10. CSM makes particularly **innovative use of observation feedback** that enhances learning. Assessors observe learners in the workplace very frequently and record the observations using a digital camera. They use the photographs to feed back to the learners, as well as to provide an assessment record. When learners review the photographs they can easily see how much knowledge and experience they are gaining.

11. Learners receive an appropriate induction that includes information relevant to their qualification. However, for the learners in the warehousing and distribution programme **induction is inconsistent and sometimes monotonous.**

12. CSM's learning programmes are appropriate to learners and employers. They offer the most suitable range of qualifications to suit the learners in their specific industries. There are few formal training sessions, but learners receive satisfactory individual coaching from assessors in their workplaces. Those on the business administration and business improvement techniques programmes have access to a range of learning materials including computer-based materials.

13. All learners have regular progress reviews, but the **reviews are not used sufficiently to guide learners**. Assessors do not always set specific targets, and the feedback they give the learner does not focus on the quality of their work.

Leadership and management

14. Directors provide **good strategic direction** for the company. CSM's objective is to develop learners' job competences and meet employers' need for a qualified workforce. It achieves this in a flexible and responsive way.

15. Managers at CSM ensure that learners benefit from **particularly effective approaches to learning in the workplace**, including job skills training from employers, and group learning sessions.

16. CSM makes **good use of alternative strategies to widen participation**. It has offered funding to learners who are not eligible for the programme, and it provides specific support to learners to ensure they achieve their qualification. Through the adequate analysis of data, CSM has identified the need to increase the number of female learners taking part in their learning programmes.

17. CSM has a **strong and effective commitment to improving the quality of the provision** for learners. Many managerial activities are carried out to ensure the provision is good. When problems are identified, managers take prompt action to rectify them. Communication between managers and staff is informal but effective.

18. CSM and employers provide learners with satisfactory resources, including specialist equipment such as digital and video cameras. Assessors are experienced and have a good knowledge of the industry.

19. The company's management information system is adequate. CSM collects information on learners' gender, ethnicity and additional learning requirements. Managers are provided with progress reports on the performance of learners from different groups.

20. CSM sets targets to maintain and increase learners' high achievement rates. These targets take account of the provider's past performance and the need to improve. CSM has targets for the time taken to complete learning programmes, but it does not have separate targets for specific groups of learners or subjects.

21. The provider has a satisfactory equality of opportunity policy and procedures. The policy reflects the latest legislation, and each member of staff is made aware of their responsibilities for implementing it. CSM's business plan highlights the planned development of staff on equality of opportunity matters.

22. CSM's monitoring of equality of opportunity and diversity in employers' businesses is satisfactory. Employers complete a checklist that elicits all the information necessary to ensure they offer a suitable environment to their learners.

23. Internal verification ensures that assessment is fair and accurate. Managers provide schedules and sampling plans to check the quality of assessment. CSM has meetings of assessors and internal verifiers to maintain consistency.

24. The self-assessment process at CSM satisfactorily covers learning and many of the provider's business functions. All members of staff are involved in the process, although employers and learners do not contribute directly to the self-assessment report. Judgements from the self-assessment process are included in the company's development plan.

25. The initial assessment of learners' needs is inadequate, and the **arrangements to provide learners with additional learning support for literacy, numeracy and language are ineffective**. To resolve this, managers have written a strategy and procedures for literacy, numeracy and language support. The provider has also appointed an experienced manager and recruited specialist staff to offer support in this area.

26. All learners receive training on equality of opportunity and diversity, and they display a satisfactory level of awareness of these issues. However, there is **insufficient reinforcement of equality of opportunity**. Learners' induction, progress reviews and learning materials do not comment on equality and diversity sufficiently. CSM has responded to this by redesigning all its training materials to ensure they promote equality of opportunity effectively.

27. CSM identified that there is **insufficient sharing of good practice** in retail and commercial enterprise. Examples of good practice by specific assessors are not always shared with the rest of the CSM team.

Leadership and management

Strengths

- good strategic direction
- particularly effective approaches to learning in the workplace
- good use of alternative strategies to widen participation
- strong and effective actions to improve the quality of provision for learners

Weaknesses

- ineffective arrangements for additional learning support
- insufficient reinforcement of equality of opportunity to learners

Engineering and manufacturing technologies

Manufacturing technologies

Strengths

- very good retention and achievement rates
- good development of learners' skills by employers
- wide range of support for learners

Weaknesses

- some slow progress by learners
- incomplete progress reviews

Retail and commercial enterprise

Warehousing and distribution

Strengths

- very good retention and achievement rates
- particularly innovative use of feedback to benefit learners
- good practical support for learners

Weaknesses

- weak induction process for learners
- insufficient sharing of good practice

Business administration and law

Strengths

- good achievement and retention rates on the team leadership programme
- good retention rate on the business administration programme
- good personal skills development
- very frequent and effective assessment

Weaknesses

- slow progress by some learners on the team leadership programmes
- insufficient use of progress reviews to guide learners

WHAT LEARNERS LIKE ABOUT CSM CONSULTING LTD:

- the opportunity to gain a formal qualification at work
- the good support from friendly and professional assessors
- the minimal amount of paperwork involved
- 'it has improved my knowledge and helped with my communication skills'
- 'I have improved my confidence and self-esteem'

WHAT LEARNERS THINK CSM CONSULTING LTD COULD IMPROVE:

- the amount of paperwork at induction
- the learning guides
- the time available at work to complete course work

DETAILED INSPECTION FINDINGS

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

Grade 2

Strengths

- good strategic direction
- particularly effective approaches to learning in the workplace
- good use of alternative strategies to widen participation
- strong and effective actions to improve the quality of provision for learners

Weaknesses

- ineffective arrangements for additional learning support
- insufficient reinforcement of equality of opportunity to learners

28. The directors provide good strategic direction for the company. CSM's mission is to achieve high standards in developing learners' job competences, and to meet employers' need for a qualified workforce in areas where there are shortages of occupational skills. CSM achieves this in a flexible and responsive way. It has good arrangements with a range of partners, including the LSC, to identify industries where there are insufficient qualified staff and to provide training that meets these skills needs.

29. Directors and managers ensure learners benefit from particularly effective approaches to learning in the workplace. These include job skills training from employers, and group learning sessions. Learners can also work on their own by using electronic and written learning packages. Assessors give learners individual coaching, and guide them in how to provide evidence of the skills and knowledge they have gained in the workplace. The provider is effective at linking NVQs to the work of employers, and is very well organised to provide this type of learning. It fits learning and assessment around employers' complex production schedules and learners' work patterns. Assessors are based at employers' sites and often work with employers' own training departments. Regular meetings between lead assessors and assessors have a clear focus on learning and learners' performance.

30. CSM and employers provide learners with satisfactory resources. Workplace equipment to develop learners' occupational skills is good and has a clear link to the NVQ. Electronic and written learning materials are of a high standard. The range of specialist equipment to help learners with assessments is good, and includes digital and video cameras. Assessors are experienced and have significant knowledge of the industry.

31. CSM has adequate arrangements for collecting management information. The company can provide data on learners at different employers' sites. However, until recently, it has had to rely on the LSC to provide an accurate view of learners' performance. CSM has now rectified this by appointing a management information system manager. The company now collects a wide range of information on learners including data on their gender, ethnicity, additional learning requirements and disabilities, the number of starts and withdrawals, and the rate of achievement of qualifications and course outcomes. This information is used to provide reports on individual learners' progress and

performance, and on the participation rates of some groups of learners. However, reports are not available on the performance of groups such as those from minority ethnic communities.

32. CSM has effective arrangements for setting targets to maintain and increase the high achievement rates. The company's strategic plan has a clear overall achievement target for its NVQ provision and its preparation for life and work programmes. These targets take clear account of the provider's past performance and the need to increase rates. CSM has targets for the time learners take to complete learning programmes. However, the company does not have separate targets for groups of learners, subjects and assessors.

33. CSM's arrangements to provide learners with additional learning support for literacy, numeracy and language are ineffective, and managers have recognised this. To resolve the problem, CSM has written a strategy and procedures for literacy, numeracy and language support. It has also appointed an experienced manager and recruited specialist staff to develop the support. Most of the current learners have not received formal initial assessment or systematic literacy, numeracy and language support. Initial assessment and support is now offered to all new learners but it is too early to comment on its effectiveness.

Equality of opportunity

Contributory grade 3

34. CSM makes good use of alternative strategies to widen participation. It is the company's policy to accept all learners regardless of their ability or prior attainment, and to offer funding to learners who are not eligible to join the training programme. For example, CSM funded 17 of the 545 learners who started programmes in 2003-04. Assessors provide specific support to learners to ensure they achieve their qualification. In one instance, learning materials have been translated to meet the needs of Eastern European learners. In some cases, assessors have developed effective relationships with employers for whom English is an additional language in order to support them during learners' assessment activities. CSM also uses a wide range of tools to record assessments, in response to learners' preferred learning styles. All assessors have access to digital cameras to help learners obtain evidence for their portfolios. This is particularly useful for learners who cannot collect paperwork from their employers. Audio cassette recorders and video cameras are also used to record evidence.

35. CSM's policy and procedures for equality and diversity are satisfactory. The policy refers to the latest legislation and clearly establishes CSM's codes of practice. The responsibilities of each member of staff and manager, for implementing the policy, are clearly outlined. One of the directors is accountable for equality of opportunity, and CSM has recently appointed a dedicated manager to champion its equality of opportunity activities. Learners' complaints are monitored effectively and followed up to a satisfactory resolution.

36. Through the analysis of data, CSM has identified a gender imbalance in its learner numbers. The company has created an action plan which includes the identification of external partners and agencies which will help to resolve this problem.

37. CSM is redesigning its website to reflect current equality and diversity practice, using positive images and role models.

38. CSM has included staff training in equality of opportunity in its business development plan. All staff and managers are receiving further development on equality and diversity issues, and all new staff receive an induction which covers the subject. Equality of opportunity has recently become a fixed agenda item at all CSM's management and staff meetings. It is too early to judge the effect of this.

39. The monitoring of employers' equality of opportunity arrangements is satisfactory. CSM has designed an employer checklist to ensure all workplaces offer a suitable, safe environment where equality and diversity are promoted.

40. All learners receive training on equality of opportunity from their employers, and most display a satisfactory awareness of the subject. Some learners have received specialist training on specific topics such as dignity and respect in the workplace.

41. CSM does not sufficiently reinforce learners' understanding of equality of opportunity issues. The provider recognised this weakness in its self-assessment report, and the development plan includes the objective of increasing the promotion of equality of opportunity by staff to all learners. The learners' induction, learning materials and progress review materials do not contain enough information on equality of opportunity. CSM has redesigned all its materials to ensure that staff reinforce equality and diversity effectively every time they meet learners.

Quality improvement

Contributory grade 3

42. CSM has taken strong and effective action to improve the quality of provision for learners. The company's approach to quality improvement has secured high retention and achievement rates and good provision for learners. CSM has a detailed quality improvement policy, and its job descriptions, appraisals, and staff development are all focused on raising standards for learners. Meetings of directors, managers, lead assessors and assessors are all used to improve the learning provision. Directors and lead assessors frequently visit employers' sites to check standards and identify areas for improvement. Lead assessors regularly observe the work of assessors, and ensure that any identified best practice is communicated to all assessors. However, managers do not produce overall reports on the observations of assessors' work. CSM uses end-of-course learner questionnaires and regular meetings with employers to collect views on CSM's performance, and although it does not produce reports on these, it acts on the feedback received. The company has developed a service level agreement with its employers that covers issues such as the amount of work time allocated to learning. There is a new quality procedures manual for CSM's business functions, and a dedicated quality improvement manager takes action if any of the quality improvement arrangements identifies a problem. However, there are some aspects of quality improvement that are weak, and CSM does not audit the effectiveness of its quality improvement arrangements.

43. Assessors use a range of appropriate assessment methods, and internal verification ensures that assessment is fair and accurate. CSM has a detailed internal verification policy which provides clear guidance on conducting verification. Internal verifiers are appropriately qualified or are working towards qualifications. Managers provide schedules and sampling plans for internal verification, and new assessors receive more verification visits than their experienced colleagues. Internal verifiers give assessors written and verbal feedback after they observe an assessment, although it is not always sufficiently evaluative. Assessors and internal verifiers hold meetings to ensure assessment is consistent and to

share information from awarding bodies. Recent external verification reports are positive about the standard of assessment at CSM.

44. The self-assessment process satisfactorily covers learning and many of CSM's business functions. Directors, managers and staff are involved in the process. Learners' and employers' views contribute to the self-assessment process, but employers are not directly involved. The current self-assessment report is CSM's second. Many of the judgements in the report are accurate, although some of the strengths identified are normal practice, a few weaknesses are overstated, and some weaknesses were omitted. The report does not identify separate strengths and weaknesses for subject areas, and the layout of the report is difficult to follow. Judgements from the self-assessment process are integrated into the company's development plan.

AREAS OF LEARNING

Engineering and manufacturing technologies

Grade 2

Contributory areas:	Number of learners	Contributory grade
Manufacturing technologies		2
Employer training pilot	493	2

45. Under the ETP programme, CSM offers level 2 NVQ programmes in food and drink manufacturing operations, performing manufacturing operations and business improvement techniques. All the learners are in full-time employment and all training and assessment takes place in the workplace. There are 420 learners on the food and drink manufacturing operations programme, 52 on the performing manufacturing operations programme and 21 on the business improvement techniques programme. All on-the-job training is provided by workplace supervisors. Business improvement techniques learners have access to a series of formal training modules provided by a subcontractor. CSM assesses learners' work and manages the NVQ programme, allocating assessors solely to learners at a particular employer. All internal verification is carried out by CSM's lead assessors. All learners receive a planned visit from their assessor every four weeks.

Manufacturing technologies

Strengths

- very good retention and achievement rates
- good development of learners' skills by employers
- wide range of support for learners

Weaknesses

- some slow progress by learners
- incomplete progress reviews

Achievement and standards

46. Retention rates are very good. In food and drink manufacturing, the retention rates in 2003-04 and 2004-05 were 88 per cent and 87 per cent respectively. The number of learners increased by 63 per cent in 2004-05. The retention rates on performing manufacturing operations were 90 per cent and 85 per cent in 2003-04 and 2004-05 respectively, with an increase in the number of learners of 63 per cent in 2004-05. In business improvement techniques, the retention rate is very good at 100 per cent in 2004-05. The achievement rate is very good on all programmes. A large number of learners do not complete their programme within the planned timescale but go on to achieve the qualification later. The proportion of learners exceeding the planned timescale in food and drink manufacturing was 11 per cent in 2003-04 and 34 per cent in 2004-05. In performing manufacturing operations, the proportions were 50 per cent and 45 per cent respectively.

47. Learners' personal and occupational skills are good. Many learners have been

employed for a considerable time before starting their NVQ programme and are fully aware of all processes at work. Many also display improved confidence and self-esteem. For many, this qualification is the first they have achieved and they take great pride in it. CSM celebrates this success with learners during awards events.

48. Some learners make slow progress towards their qualification. There is not enough involvement of workplace supervisors and employers in the NVQ process. Employers do not always provide CSM with learners' work schedules so that reviews and assessments can be planned efficiently. At some sites, programmes start at two- or four-monthly intervals, and some learners experience a delay in starting their programmes. CSM has responded well when learners have been made redundant, and has adapted its approach to ensure they can achieve their qualification before leaving.

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

LSC funded work-based learning																	
Employer training pilot	2005-06		2004-05		2003-04												
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	
Number of starts	500	100	999	100	470	100											
Retained*	94	19	867	87	414	88											
Successfully completed	85	17	761	76	414	88											
Still in learning	406	81	87	9	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

49. Learners develop good skills and knowledge in the workplace through their employers' training programmes. CSM plans the learning programmes so that the NVQ units chosen reflect learners' skills and their job roles. Assessments are planned well and assessors make good use of observations. They record observations using photographs and video recording. Some written records of observations do not contain sufficient detail on the learners' performance or how they can improve.

50. CSM provides a wide range of good support for learners. There are assessors permanently based at one factory site, giving learners there more access to their assessor. Learners can use video cameras and digital recorders to record their responses to knowledge questions. This helps to support learners for whom English is an additional language. Some learning and assessment materials have been produced in languages other than English to support specific learners. One learner who was profoundly deaf was able to answer knowledge questions using a computer provided by CSM. His employer also allowed him extra time away from the production line to work with the assessor. This learner was promoted to a supervisory role. Learners on the business improvement techniques programme are issued with background knowledge forms on which to record their responses to written questions and demonstrate their knowledge of certain NVQ requirements. A subcontractor provides 90-minute formal training sessions, but if learners are unable or unwilling to attend these sessions, there are no alternative learning support materials available. The assessor has devised a series of his own handouts and these are issued on request but there are no formal CSM learning support materials available.

51. Learners' induction is satisfactory and includes adequate information on their qualification. However, staff do not sufficiently consider learners' prior experience when developing their individual learning plan. CSM has recognised this and plans to remedy it. Initial assessment of learners' literacy, numeracy and language skills is weak, but assessors work well with learners and provide a good level of informal support to individuals with identified needs.

52. CSM's learning programmes are appropriate both to learners and to employers. CSM works well with employers to establish the most appropriate range of qualifications. There have been recent developments to introduce level 3 programmes which will support learners' progression.

53. Progress reviews are incomplete. Learners are not fully involved in action-planning for assessment visits. They are not always set specific targets to aid progression. Assessors' feedback to learners does not focus on the quality of their work, and offers little advice on improvement. Assessors take responsibility for the learners' work and keep their portfolios at the end of the review. Few keep learners' individual learning plans up to date and learners have little understanding of the learning plan's function. Assessors often feed back to learners in unsuitable environments such as the shop floor. They do not use reviews to reinforce and raise awareness of equal opportunities and health and safety.

Leadership and management

54. Communication is good and assessors can access policies, procedures and learning materials through the company's intranet. Assessors have a good level of knowledge and understanding of the manufacturing industry and use this well when working with learners. As they are based on employers' premises they are able to ensure that their skills and knowledge are up to date. Assessors are observed frequently by the internal verifier. They receive written feedback on their performance but this does not always contain sufficient comment on how they may improve the process.

55. The self-assessment process is satisfactory but, while there is good initial involvement of staff in the process, there is no consideration of employers' views. The self-assessment report was self-critical and identified many aspects of the provision accurately.

56. CSM has carried out little staff training to raise awareness of equality and diversity. Learners' understanding of the topic is satisfactory and many employers actively promote their employees' understanding of equality and diversity.

Retail and commercial enterprise**Grade 2**

Contributory areas:	Number of learners	Contributory grade
<i>Warehousing and distribution</i>		2
Employer training pilot	35	2

57. CSM offers NVQs at level 2 in warehousing and distribution operations to a number of large national companies under the ETP programme. There are currently 35 learners on the programme, all of whom are in full-time employment. All training and assessment takes place in the workplace. Workplace supervisors carry out on-the-job training and CSM assesses learners' work and manages the NVQ programme. All internal verification is carried out by CSM's lead assessors. All learners receive a planned visit from their assessor every four weeks.

Warehousing and distribution*Strengths*

- very good retention and achievement rates
- particularly innovative use of feedback to benefit learners
- good practical support for learners

Weaknesses

- weak induction process for learners
- insufficient sharing of good practice

Achievement and standards

58. CSM has very good retention and achievement rates for the warehousing and distribution NVQ programme. Out of 36 learners who started the programme in 2005-06, 35 are still in learning. In 2003-04, the retention and achievement rates were both 93 per cent and all learners who were retained, achieved their NVQ. However, some learners are making slow progress. In 2003-04, 21 per cent of learners completed their programme after their planned end date and in 2004-05 this figure had risen to 39 per cent.

59. Learners acquire good workplace skills and work at or above their target NVQ level. Most employers provide their own in-house training programmes and many learners have been in the same job for many years gaining considerable experience and knowledge about their work. They value the opportunity to gain a qualification that recognises this experience, and they display increased levels of confidence and self-esteem.

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

LSC funded work-based learning																	
Employer training pilot	2005-06		2004-05		2003-04												
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	
Number of starts	36		149	100	71	100											
Retained*	0		139	93	66	93											
Successfully completed	0		139	93	66	93											
Still in learning	35		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

60. CSM has a very effective assessment system and makes particularly innovative use of observation feedback to enhance learning. Assessors observe learners in the workplace at least three times and record the observation using a digital camera. The photographic evidence is printed onto the observation report with clear and accurate written details of what has been observed. These reports are valued highly by learners as they help them see how much knowledge and experience they have gained. Through their work for the qualification, learners have become more confident in their roles and have increased the standard of their work.

61. Learners receive good practical support, both from CSM and from their employers. Assessors are based at the learners' workplace for the duration of the qualification. They know the factory and its processes and procedures well, and are able to help learners collect evidence that would otherwise be difficult to observe. Assessors are flexible and plan their observations to take account of learners' shift patterns. Often, assessors use their initiative to capture evidence that has arisen unplanned in the learners' fast-moving working environment. Assessors have extensive experience in the industry and have achieved or are working towards relevant assessors' qualifications. Employers encourage all their staff to participate in the programme and CSM will train those who are not eligible for government funding, at its own expense. Most employers allow learners to take time during working hours to meet their assessor and for assessments. Assessors give additional time to supporting learners with literacy, numeracy and language needs to help them complete their knowledge questions. Learners recognise that their assessor is very patient and understanding of their needs.

62. The induction process is weak. Assessors induct individual new learners in the workplace. There is no written procedure for inductions, and their inconsistency has been identified in the self-assessment report. Most only last 30 minutes and learners have little recollection of their content. Learners are issued with an induction pack which is dull and uninspiring. They are requested to read it in their own time without the assessor's input.

63. There is no initial assessment of learners' skills, although there is a very basic skill scan to identify the most suitable optional NVQ units for each learner. There is no attempt to identify learners' prior knowledge or their literacy, numeracy and language support needs. CSM has identified the need to amend the induction programme to take account of the identification of learners' needs and to offer specialist support. It is planning a strategy to deal with this.

Leadership and management

64. Communications, although informal, are very frequent and have improved since the recent management restructure. There is a comprehensive internal verification policy and procedures, and internal verification is carried out to a satisfactory standard by qualified and experienced verifiers. The use of resources is adequate. All staff are suitably experienced and qualified. Assessors make particularly good use of a range of digital recording equipment, although paper resources are only adequate.

65. Learners do not always have sufficient access to information, advice and guidance. CSM is aware of this and has developed a policy to remedy it, but has yet to implement it fully.

66. Equality and diversity are poorly promoted. They are mentioned at induction but rarely discussed thereafter, and learners' understanding of the subject is basic. However, all workplaces have extensive equality of opportunity policies and learners are well protected.

67. There is insufficient sharing of good practice. Inspectors identified several examples of good practice during the inspection. In one, induction and learning materials have been translated into Polish to support a group of learners who speak English as an additional language. In another, a tutor has prepared a presentation to use at learners' inductions. It covers key points such as qualification information and the appeals procedure. However, CSM has not shared these good practices with staff across the organisation. The sharing of best practice to improve the provision is not a standing agenda item at staff meetings.

Business administration and law**Grade 2**

Contributory areas:	Number of learners	Contributory grade
Administration Employer training pilot	29	2
Business management Employer training pilot	48	2

68. CSM provides NVQ training for 48 learners on a level 2 team leadership programme, and 29 on a level 2 business administration programme. All learners are employed in one of four companies. Their job roles are analysed to identify the vocational qualifications that best meet their needs and those of their employers. In addition, some learners receive in-house training at their employers' premises. Learners' progress is reviewed and they are assessed in their workplace at regular intervals. There are two assessors, one for each programme, and one internal verifier.

Strengths

- good achievement and retention rates on the team leadership programme
- good retention rate on the business administration programme
- good personal skills development
- very frequent and effective assessment

Weaknesses

- slow progress by some learners on the team leadership programmes
- insufficient use of progress reviews to guide learners

Achievement and standards

69. Achievement and retention rates on the team leadership programme are good. In 2004-05, the achievement rate was 68 per cent and the retention rate was 86 per cent. Nineteen per cent of the learners are still in learning. Forty of the 43 learners who started in 2005-06 are still in learning.

70. The retention rate on the business administration programme is good. All except one of the 30 learners who started the programme in 2005-06 have been retained and are on target to complete their programme by the end of the inspection week. Portfolios contain a comprehensive range of relevant evidence sourced from the workplace. Learners on both programmes usually take responsibility for matching evidence to their programme requirements, and they do this effectively.

71. Learners develop good personal skills. Many learners have not participated in a learning programme for a considerable time. They respond well to the challenge of balancing work with their programme by developing effective time management and other coping skills. Many learners report that their self-confidence and esteem has improved as a result of their successes with the programme. They have become better at monitoring the quality of their own work and taking action to improve it as required. Learners'

participation in group learning has improved their teamwork and interpersonal skills. They have developed good working relationships with colleagues and can work well independently or collaboratively. Some learners report that the skills they have gained have helped them to clarify their future employment plans. In some cases, they have applied for other courses as a result of their experience.

72. Some team leadership learners are making slow progress. Twenty-one per cent of the learners who started the programme in 2004-05 continued beyond their planned end date. Approximately 10 per cent of the learners who started in 2005-06 are making slow progress. CSM has identified why individual learners are making slow progress and has worked with the employers and learners to correct the situation. However, it is too early to judge the effect of this work on learners' progress.

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

LSC funded work-based learning																
Employer training pilot	2005-06		2004-05													
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Number of starts	90		43	100												
Retained*	0		37	86												
Successfully completed	0		29	67												
Still in learning	69		8	19												

*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

73. There is very frequent and effective assessment, and learners know how and when they will next be assessed. Assessors are based on employers' premises and adapt their activities very effectively to their shift patterns. Assessment is planned well to meet learners' needs. The assessor is readily available and can advise learners on issues as they arise. Learners value the ease of access to assessment. Many work in busy environments where the pace and variety of tasks are unpredictable, and appointments with assessors often have to be changed at short notice. Good communications are maintained between learners and the assessor to keep all concerned informed of changes to the timing and focus of meetings. All assessment is fair, accurate and well recorded with clear assessment decisions. Assessors use a very good range of assessment methods and provide good feedback on how learners are performing. They guide learners on how best to improve their performance, but they do not always correct spelling and grammatical mistakes in learners' work. Employers allow time for study and reasonable access to information to help learners with their programme.

74. There are few formal training sessions but learners receive satisfactory individual coaching during on-the-job assessment visits. This develops their skills and knowledge. Learners on the team leadership programme have access to a satisfactory range of computer-based learning materials. Their employer also enables them to follow an appropriate range of additional qualifications that enhance their career and employment prospects. The business administration programme is supported by paper- and computer-based learning materials. However, CSM does not provide a full range of appropriate materials for all learners.

75. Learners receive an appropriate induction to their programme. However, the topics covered are not always adequately reinforced during the rest of the programme.

76. All learners receive regular progress reviews but these are not used sufficiently to guide them. Assessors do not have written procedures to help them complete the progress reviews. Many progress review documents are vague and simply repeat the assessment plans. Too little attention is paid to the learners' on-the-job experience and to setting targets for improvement. When outcomes are recorded, they are insufficiently evaluative and not used to guide future actions. Review documents make insufficient reference to how learners develop as individuals and interact with customers and colleagues. The progress review process does not check and reinforce learners' understanding of equality and diversity issues. There is little use of the outcome of progress reviews in the individual learning plan. The standard learning plan form does not reflect the individualised programme of each learner.

Leadership and management

77. Communication is effective. There are regular meetings with set agendas, and they are minuted appropriately. Appraisal is used effectively to identify targets for improvement. There are suitable opportunities for staff development. CSM collects data and has started to use it effectively to improve the provision.

78. Most learners have a satisfactory awareness of their rights and responsibilities and how the law can protect them at work. They know what to do if they wish to raise any concerns, and most have an appropriate understanding of the assessment appeals procedure. Equality of opportunity is covered adequately at induction, but procedures to eliminate harassment or oppressive behaviour are not effectively emphasised during the learners' programme. Equality of opportunity is not reinforced or checked effectively at later stages of the programme.

79. Assessment and internal verification practice are satisfactory. Internal verifiers observe assessors at work and give them appropriate written feedback. Sampling of portfolios is adequate. The planning and recording of internal verification is satisfactory and leads to quality improvement. Staff have adequate opportunities to share good practice.

80. The initial assessment of learners' needs is inadequate. Many learners on the team leadership programme are tested to assess their literacy and numeracy skills, but not until too late in the programme.

81. Staff were suitably involved in the self-assessment process. The self-assessment report is critical and often evaluative but does not identify all the strengths and weaknesses in the provision. Many of the strengths identified in the report were no more than normal practice.

