

# REINSPECTION REPORT

## **NITAL Reinspection**

**30 November 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
- **learndirect** 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.

## 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*

# REINSPECTION REPORT

## NITAL Reinspection

### Contents

#### Summary

Description of the provider	1
Overall effectiveness	1
Grades	2
About the reinspection	3

#### Detailed reinspection findings

Leadership and management	5
Equality of opportunity	6
Quality improvement	8
Engineering and manufacturing technologies	11
Construction, planning and the built environment	14

## REINSPECTION REPORT

### DESCRIPTION OF THE PROVIDER

1. Northamptonshire Industrial Training Association Limited (NITAL) is a charitable organisation founded in 1969 to administer and manage the training and development of engineers throughout Northamptonshire. NITAL has approximately 300 member companies, which together with a board of seven trustees help shape, guide and manage the business. NITAL has expanded its previous scope of training and now contracts with Northamptonshire Learning and Skills Council to provide work-based learning in engineering, business administration, customer service, distribution and warehouse operations, motor vehicle, electrical installation and accountancy. It also offers foundation programmes in literacy and numeracy, and Entry to Employment (E2E). Government-funding makes up approximately 95 per cent of the annual budget of NITAL.

2. NITAL's office is in Corby, Northamptonshire, where it occupies modern and accessible facilities. The organisation has undergone considerable change in the past two years including relocating within the town and withdrawing from commercial activity. NITAL currently employs 13 staff, one of whom is currently on long-term sick leave and another is currently on extended maternity leave. Ten of the 13 staff are directly involved in training or assessment.

3. Northamptonshire is a mix of urban and rural settlements. The main employment sectors are wholesale and retail, financial and business services, manufacturing, public services, and health and social work. Logistics has grown significantly since 1998. The unemployment rate in Northamptonshire is lower than the regional and national averages. It is easy for young people to enter employment, much of which has no training attached, and post-16 progression rates are affected. Equally, a high proportion of adults without level 2 qualifications are in the workforce rather than being unemployed. Northamptonshire has a buoyant economy and areas of considerable affluence along with significant areas of deprivation.

### OVERALL EFFECTIVENESS

#### Reinspection Grade 3

4. **The overall effectiveness of the provision is satisfactory.** Leadership and management are satisfactory as are the arrangements for equality of opportunity and quality improvement. The work-based learning provision in construction, planning and the built environment is good while provision in engineering and manufacturing technologies is satisfactory.

5. **The inspection team had some confidence in the reliability of the self-assessment process.** The current self-assessment report is overly descriptive, but broadly accurate within the areas of learning. Strengths and weaknesses are often not backed by sufficient evidence. Many of the strengths matched those identified by inspectors, but different weaknesses were identified. The self-assessment process is consultative and makes good use of data. The draft self-assessment report is shared with staff and the board. There is insufficient consultation over grades within the report.

## NITAL REINSPECTION

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

NITAL has taken decisive action to resolve weaknesses and to monitor the effectiveness of quality improvement initiatives. There is now an appropriate focus on the effect of quality improvement in raising success rates, which have increased in all areas of learning since the previous inspection. Weaknesses from the previous inspection have mainly been resolved, but the weakness in construction related to the co-ordination of on- and off-the-job training remains. Managers and staff have focused on improving provision through clear progress against actions identified in the post-inspection action plan.

## GRADES

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

Grades awarded at previous inspection

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

Engineering and manufacturing technologies			4
Contributory areas:	Number of learners	Contributory grade	
<b>Engineering</b>		<b>4</b>	
Apprenticeships for young people	104	4	

Construction, planning and the built environment			3
Contributory areas:	Number of learners	Contributory grade	
<b>Building services</b>		<b>3</b>	
Apprenticeships for young people	15	3	

Business administration and law			3
Contributory areas:	Number of learners	Contributory grade	
<b>Accounting and finance</b>			
Apprenticeships for young people	1	3	
NVQ training for young people	2	3	
<b>Administration</b>			
Apprenticeships for young people	19	3	
<b>Customer service</b>			
Apprenticeships for young people	3	3	

Grades awarded at reinspection

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

Engineering and manufacturing technologies		3
Contributory areas:	Number of learners	Contributory grade
<i>Engineering</i> Apprenticeships for young people	100	3 3

  

Construction, planning and the built environment		2
Contributory areas:	Number of learners	Contributory grade
<i>Construction crafts</i> Apprenticeships for young people	9	2 2

## ABOUT THE REINSPECTION

7. The full reinspection covered the provider's leadership and management and provision in engineering and manufacturing technologies and construction, planning and the built environment.

8. The provision in business administration and law and in retailing and commercial enterprise was not inspected as there were too few learners to be inspected separately. Judgements about these programmes are included in the leadership and management section.

9. NITAL currently has 122 learners. There are nine learners in construction, planning and the built environment and 100 learners in engineering, technology and manufacturing. In addition, NITAL has a few learners in business administration and law and in retailing and commercial enterprise. NITAL also has 10 learners on E2E programmes, but as it did not offer E2E at the time of the previous inspection, this area was not reinspected.

10. The reinspection involved three monitoring visits by the lead inspector over a one-year period, followed by a final reinspection visit by the lead inspector and two vocational inspectors.

Number of inspectors	3
Number of inspection days	12
Number of learners interviewed	33
Number of staff interviewed	31
Number of employers interviewed	14
Number of subcontractors interviewed	2
Number of locations/sites/learning centres visited	19
Number of visits	4

## **Leadership and management**

### **Strengths**

- good actions to improve provision
- productive links with employers
- effective use of data

### **Weaknesses**

- delays in implementation of some quality improvement processes
- insufficient reinforcement of equality of opportunity
- insufficient formal business planning

## **Engineering and manufacturing technologies**

### *Strengths*

- good success rates on advanced apprenticeship programmes since the previous inspection
- good progression
- good development of learners' knowledge and skills

### *Weaknesses*

- slow implementation of identified support needs
- insufficient learner awareness of progress

## **Construction, planning and the built environment**

### *Strengths*

- good success rates
- good practical skills developed by learners
- particularly effective support for learners

### *Weaknesses*

- insufficient co-ordination of on- and off-the-job training
- insufficient reinforcement of equality at reviews

## DETAILED REINSPECTION FINDINGS

### LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

Grade 3

#### Strengths

- good actions to improve provision
- productive links with employers
- effective use of data

#### Weaknesses

- delays in implementation of some quality improvement processes
- insufficient reinforcement of equality of opportunity
- insufficient formal business planning

11. The collection and analysis of data was inadequate at the previous inspection but it is now very effective. There is now close monitoring of leavers, achievers and non-achievers along with reasons for leaving. NITAL works closely with employers to resolve problems and to keep learners on programme. NITAL tries to monitor subsequent progress of non-achievers to ascertain whether they are likely to return to the programme in the future. Achievement trend analysis has started to be carried out and this includes targeted achievement of learners who are not funded. The number of these learners has reduced significantly from 37 at the previous inspection to only five learners currently. Useful reports are produced from the management information and these are distributed to staff and discussed during team meetings. The reports now clearly indicate trends in retention and achievement rates and success rates, as well as a comparison of recruitment trends in the past three years. In addition, information on learners' progress towards their qualification is collected at the two-weekly meetings between the training manager and each training adviser. There is now a detailed analysis of the reasons why learners leave their programmes early. NITAL does not yet sufficiently use management information to show the relative performance of different staff members and groups of learners or other information to assist marketing and recruitment.

12. NITAL has established very productive links with employers. It has approximately 300 member companies, many of which currently have learners. NITAL uses employers well to ensure that learners can cover the range of tasks in the workplace. If a workplace does not contain sufficient diversity of tasks, NITAL liaises with other employers to provide work experience for a short time to enable learners to cover the range of the national vocational qualification (NVQ). In addition, NITAL has used employers to host learners who have been made redundant, until it found another employer. In several cases, NITAL has used its links with employers to obtain employment for learners who have been made redundant. NITAL has now started to engage companies in an employers' forum as part of a move to increase levels of engagement, and to allow visits or sharing of resources and skills, in order to facilitate the exchange of learners for short periods. Five companies are currently interested in participating in this initiative.

13. Staff development and training was satisfactory at the previous inspection and

## NITAL REINSPECTION

remains so. Staff receive an annual appraisal which is used to identify training needs. Staff make self-assessments of their competence in key areas and make judgements on their own effectiveness in achieving targets. These form the basis of appraisal discussions and further targets are agreed during appraisal. Staff can access a good range of relevant training, such as health and safety awareness, assessors' qualifications, verifiers' awards and, where appropriate, additional NVQs. Most of the staff are involved in formal training, and some have attended training within the organisation to assist in succession planning. There are good progression opportunities for staff, with one assessor having recently progressed to senior management. Three current staff were previously apprentices with NITAL. Staff turnover remains high and many staff are relatively new and inexperienced. Of the current staff, approximately 40 per cent have joined the organisation in the past 12 months. They are supported through reduced workloads and higher levels of personal supervision. More recently appointed staff have a review within three months as part of their probationary period.

14. Internal communications are satisfactory. NITAL has a satisfactory range of well-attended internal meetings, including two-weekly meetings between the training manager and each training adviser, the monthly team meeting and the quarterly quality meeting. Staff are kept well informed about progress against the post-inspection action plan. They are also given information on the reduction in the number of learners who are no longer funded. Minutes are well recorded, but still contain too much superficial information with few detailed follow-up action points. NITAL produces a newsletter which provides learners and staff with a variety of relevant information.

15. There is insufficient formal business planning. The three-year strategic plan for 2005 to 2007 includes an overall vision for the future and short-term aims, but NITAL has still applied insufficient effort into setting out how these will be delivered. NITAL still has no operational plan which breaks down overall aims into more achievable objectives and individual actions. Since the previous inspection, NITAL has been working towards targets in the post-inspection action plan and the self-assessment report. However, responsibilities and timescales have still not been identified. The organisation relies on the post-inspection action plan to deal with weaknesses, but this does not consider how strengths will be maintained and satisfactory aspects improved.

### **Equality of opportunity**

### **Contributory grade 3**

16. One staff member has responsibility for equality of opportunity as part of her job. All learners are provided with the contact details of the equality officer when they start at NITAL. They are given adequate information on equality of opportunity at induction through a range of videos and published materials and a useful leaflet which outlines their rights and responsibilities. A complaints form is also given and this is backed up by a range of detailed guidance for reference during and after induction. However, the pack does not include more recent legislation. Induction packs also include good guidance on local and national organisations which offer support on a range of personal issues such as benefits, housing, substance misuse, pregnancy and child protection. Most learners have sufficient recall of this training and have a satisfactory awareness and understanding of equality and diversity. Training for staff in equality is satisfactory. Key members of staff attend external training in equality and diversity and share the information with colleagues at staff meetings and training update sessions. In the past year, all NITAL staff have received training in equality and diversity, covering applicable legislation, definitions, discrimination and harassment.

17. A suitable range of policies and procedures relating to equality is in place for staff and learners. NITAL has appropriate policies covering bullying and harassment, discipline and grievance, and an adoptive policy which is provided to companies that do not have an existing equal opportunities policy for their business. Procedures also exist for monitoring equality and for learners who are at risk of leaving early. Direct reference and guidance on equality is given in the employers' handbook. NITAL's own policies and procedures have recently been updated. There is a satisfactory system for dealing with complaints, all of which are thoroughly investigated and, in most cases, are satisfactorily resolved. All complaints are discussed at quality committee meetings. Learners are fully aware of the complaints procedure and the protections afforded to them by NITAL.

18. NITAL has started to introduce measures to improve the participation of under-represented groups, particularly in engineering. The recruitment officers have good working relationships with local schools, colleges and Connexions, and attend local careers events to promote engineering to women. A female engineer who is employed by NITAL is a good role model and features in the organisation's marketing material. The equal opportunities officer has arranged a visit to the engineering department of the local college for groups of girls from local schools, to break down stereotypical views and to attract women into engineering. However, there is only one woman currently on an engineering programme, there are no women on construction programmes, and two women are on E2E programmes following engineering options. Under-representation of women on these programmes is identified as a weakness in the self-assessment report. NITAL has started to engage with the local Sikh community and has visited local mosques. It has also persisted in continued attempts to work with a local African-Caribbean association, but these initiatives have had little success. Of the current learners, only three are from black or minority ethnic communities.

19. NITAL's use of data to monitor equality of opportunity is satisfactory. Analysis of the ethnic origin of applicants is well established and comparisons are made between successive years. NITAL also analyses numbers of learners from black or minority ethnic groups who start programmes, and qualification outcomes, but although it has been identified that fewer learners from these groups achieve, little action has been taken to resolve the matter.

20. NITAL has an adequate strategy for providing literacy and numeracy support. Two of the staff have appropriate qualifications and experience to support learners with literacy and numeracy needs. A further member of staff speaks several languages and is able to support learners with language needs. NITAL is aware of the importance of providing additional learning support, but its provision is sometimes delayed and it is not always well recorded. However, NITAL provides an appropriate level of support for most learners.

21. Monitoring of equality of opportunity in the workplace has improved since the previous inspection and is now satisfactory. NITAL has started to obtain copies of the employers' policies and intends to monitor these on an annual basis. If employers do not have their own policy, NITAL provides a policy for their use. The equal opportunities officer has started to visit companies to check the existence of relevant policies. To date, 70 per cent of the 89 companies have been visited and a schedule is in place to complete all visits by April 2007. Annual questionnaires will then be issued to check employers' adherence to their policies.

22. NITAL has now established an equal opportunities committee which meets every six months. A female engineering learner is on this committee, along with the equality officer and representatives from employers and the college. Discussions include performance against equality and diversity impact measures and training issues. Equality of opportunity is an agenda item at staff meetings. The outcomes of company visits are discussed and issues are raised. However, there is insufficient discussion at board level of equal opportunities issues identified in staff minutes.

23. There is insufficient reinforcement of equal opportunities after the induction period. Although equality of opportunity is included as a discussion topic at progress reviews, it is not dealt with in detail. Questions are asked, but answers are often cursory and there is little further debate. If learners are unaware of the correct responses they are directed to research answers.

### Quality improvement

### Contributory grade 3

24. NITAL has taken decisive action to resolve identified weaknesses and to monitor the effectiveness of quality improvement initiatives. There is now an appropriate focus on the effect of quality improvement in raising success rates. Weaknesses from the previous inspection have mainly been resolved except for the weakness in construction related to the co-ordination of on- and off-the-job training. Managers and staff have focused on improving provision by working towards actions identified in the post-inspection action plan. Following the previous inspection, the NITAL board decided to stop recruiting in business administration, warehousing and customer service and concentrate on engineering and construction provision. They also decided to honour their commitment to existing learners and to continue offering training in these areas at a reduced level on a commercial basis. NITAL introduced two-weekly reviews between the training manager and each training adviser with a clear focus on learners' progress, particularly the learners who have passed their funding date. Discussion at the meetings focuses on learners' progress and barriers to learning.

25. Most minutes of meetings include discussion on quality and all staff are aware of the importance of timely achievement. NITAL now uses a range of evaluation methods to assure the quality of provision. NITAL's managers observe some off-the-job training sessions as part of monitoring subcontractors. They are also due to receive reports from the subcontracting colleges on their own observations. Induction sessions are observed and, where identified, necessary improvements are made. Learners' reviews and interviews are now also subject to observations. Performance of the organisation is effectively communicated to all members of staff. NITAL has introduced a new system, overseen by the training manager, to improve the monitoring of learners' progression, by using red, amber and green colour coding. Those who are at risk are identified through the two-weekly reviews with the training advisers. Appropriate action plans are then developed to deal with the risk.

26. The quality committee now appropriately focuses on the improvements and progress against the post-inspection action plan. The wide range of quality procedures covers all key processes and documents, but some procedures, notably the one for internal auditing, are too generic and do not refer directly to teaching and learning. Many of the procedures are not updated. The audit schedule has not yet been fully implemented.

27. Arrangements for collecting feedback remain satisfactory. Learner questionnaires are distributed annually and employer questionnaires are distributed twice each year. The information is analysed and a graphical report and a conclusions document are circulated to all staff. The outcomes of evaluations and analysis of the questionnaires are discussed at assessor meetings and at the quality committee meetings, and some improvements are made. However, there is no formal action plan agreed from the analysis. Different questionnaires are used to collect relevant information on different aspects of the learners' experience. Response rates remain low and NITAL is evaluating how best to distribute questionnaires to improve the response rate.

28. The monitoring of subcontractors was satisfactory at the previous inspection and remains so. Clear service level agreements are in place with each of the three subcontracting colleges, but in some cases they have been delayed. For example, the agreement with Northampton College was only signed in late November, three months after learners had started at the college. Monthly meetings take place between NITAL's training manager and subcontractor representatives. These meetings now include detailed discussions on operational matters and improvements, as well as monitoring individual progress at college.

29. The board receives minutes from the quality committee and these identify an appropriate focus on audit and quality assurance, particularly the management of subcontractors and progress against the post-inspection action plan. There is suitable reference to the outcome of learner questionnaires, but actions are not sufficiently explicit or time bound. Progress against actions are not sufficiently evaluative and are not easily monitored through successive minutes. Progress against the post-inspection action plan is discussed at board level but this is not reflected in the board minutes. A board member is now a member of the action team to oversee the action plan and to report directly to the board, but this is not reflected sufficiently in the minutes.

30. There have been delays in implementing some quality improvement processes. For example, the auditing process has not yet been established, and protracted negotiations with one college over clauses in the service level agreement delayed the signing of the agreement until mid-November 2006. Managers have reviewed and updated many policies and procedures for key training processes. The procedures manual is comprehensive, but it is confusing as procedures for the learning process are included with those relating to staffing and financial matters. The audit schedule which was introduced before the previous inspection is not yet established. NITAL has recently introduced a schedule for the observation of key learner processes, but some of the events have not yet taken place. Review paperwork is audited after each review by the training manager or the key skills assessor, but they have not identified inaccuracies on some individual learning plans.

31. The current self-assessment report is overly descriptive but broadly accurate across the areas of learning. Where strengths and weaknesses have been identified, they are often not backed up by sufficient evidence. Many of the strengths in the self-assessment report matched those identified by inspectors but different weaknesses were also identified by inspectors. The self-assessment process is consultative and makes good use of data. Self-assessment is an ongoing process and involves all staff as well as the views of learners, employers and other partners. The self-assessment process is co-ordinated by the operations manager. The draft self-assessment report is shared with staff and the board

## NITAL REINSPECTION

but there is insufficient consultation over grades. NITAL has not identified that improvements in success rates are not significant at all levels on all programmes.

## AREAS OF LEARNING

### Engineering and manufacturing technologies

Grade 3

Contributory areas:	Number of learners	Contributory grade
<b>Engineering</b> Apprenticeships for young people	100	<b>3</b> 3

32. There are 100 learners on engineering and manufacturing programmes. Forty-nine are advanced apprentices, of whom five are in motor vehicle. Thirty-nine of the 51 apprentices are in engineering and manufacture. All learners are employed and have been recruited directly from local companies or through Connexions. NITAL works with a wide range of engineering and motor vehicle companies. Off-the-job training for the technical certificate and practical training is subcontracted to Northampton College and Tresham College. Motor vehicle assessment and internal verification is also the responsibility of the colleges. Apprentices attend college on a day- or block-release basis. Key skills are delivered by NITAL at its headquarters in Corby. All learners attend a two-day induction which includes initial assessment of key skills and diagnostic testing. Induction also includes instruction on health and safety and equality of opportunity, as well as team-building exercises and information on the apprenticeship framework. All learners have a company induction. Training advisers and learner support officers are responsible for individual support in the workplace.

#### *Strengths*

- good success rates on advanced apprenticeship programmes since the previous inspection
- good progression
- good development of learners' knowledge and skills

#### *Weaknesses*

- slow implementation of identified support needs
- insufficient learner awareness of progress

### Achievement and standards

33. Since the previous inspection there have been good success rates on the advanced apprenticeship programmes. Twelve learners successfully achieved their full qualification out of a possible 16, representing a 75 per cent success rate. On the apprenticeship and NVQ programmes, success rates are satisfactory with 16 of the 39 apprentices completing the framework and two of the four NVQ learners achieving their qualification. Many improvement activities have been put in place since the previous inspection, but it is too early to see the effect of these activities across all the programmes.

34. Learners on all programmes show good progression. In the past two years, 12 learners have progressed from NITAL's E2E programme and four learners have completed their advanced apprenticeship. Many of the advanced apprentices complete a higher

## NITAL REINSPECTION

national certificate with local colleges, supported by their companies, and others have progressed onto institute of leadership and management courses offered by NITAL. Some of the apprentices who complete their programmes have progressed onto supervisory and management posts in their company.

35. Learners develop good vocational skills and knowledge. They are mentored by experienced and qualified engineering staff and technicians in their workplaces. Employers are involved in arranging practical activities to progressively consolidate and develop learners' skill. Learners make good progress at college in practical work and background knowledge sessions. Employers speak positively about NITAL and the knowledge and skills of their learners.

36. Portfolios are satisfactory and some are good. Diverse evidence is used to record competence in some areas. Employers are aware of their learners' needs and gradually develop the skill base from basic to more complex tasks as their competence improves. Motor vehicle engineering learners complete servicing and unit removal and replacement to customer requirements. Some apprentices achieve additional qualifications including health and safety, first aid, abrasive wheels and manual handling qualifications. Some apprentices are on multi-skills maintenance programmes and employers agree to additional units being taken.

### **The quality of provision**

37. Resources are satisfactory. Learners use a wide range of appropriate industrial equipment. Motor vehicle workshops are well equipped with computerised diagnostic equipment. Facilities at college are also satisfactory.

38. Progress reviews are now satisfactory. They take place every 12 weeks in the workplace and there is one review every year at college with the tutor. Employers are present at most reviews where targets are reviewed and work is completed on the technical certificate. Health and safety and equality are reviewed, and this involves the learners answering one question from a standard list. However, there is little development of these topics. Targets are set for the next review but these are not always detailed.

39. Co-ordination of training in the workplace is now satisfactory. Employers are aware of the learners' programmes at college and the training advisers link college activity to workplace tasks where possible. One learner who was insufficiently challenged with his engineering craft college programme was allowed to attend for an additional day to take a national certificate.

40. Workplace assessment is now satisfactory. Assessment visits for learners in mechanical engineering take place every four weeks. These visits are well planned and include a structured review of all activities since the last visit. Observations of workplace activities are carried out where possible with effective consolidation of related theory. Checking of portfolio evidence and cross-referencing are thorough. Targets are set for the next assessment visit. Some planned assessment activities did not take place as the learners had not presented the agreed information for discussion at assessment. Assessment of motor vehicle learners is subcontracted to a local college. This process is now well managed by NITAL's staff and there are effective links between the two parties. Learners across all programmes appreciate the improvement in support from NITAL training advisers since the previous inspection. Links with employers are effective.

NITAL's staff have recently been successful in placing a redundant apprentice with another member company. Assessment is also arranged at weekends to suit employer and learner shift patterns.

41. Assessment of literacy and numeracy needs is satisfactory. Needs are identified at initial assessment and are supported by appropriately qualified staff. However, the implementation of support for some learners is slow. One learner had a numeracy need identified in August, but at the time of inspection, support had not been organised. Another learner was having difficulty progressing through a numeracy support pack, but the learner's progress had not been monitored one month later.

42. Learners are insufficiently aware of the progress they are making on their programme. They rely totally on the training adviser to direct them towards completion. Learners are not sure of the amount of framework elements they have completed and have no cumulative information to identify their progress with the technical certificate, key skills and the NVQ. Much of the information on some individual learning plans is incorrect. Completion dates are incorrectly stated and are not modified, support needs are not shown and the provider for the technical certificate is incorrectly stated.

### **Leadership and management**

43. Internal verification of portfolios and assessment in the workplace are satisfactory and take place on a frequent basis. There are monthly standardisation meetings for the engineering team. Resources are satisfactory. Staff are appropriately qualified as assessors and internal verifiers, and staff development needs are satisfied. Employers have detailed packs which include a full range of documents and schemes of work from the colleges. Employer health and safety and other compulsory documents are available in the training advisers' pack. Equality of opportunity is covered at reviews, but opportunities are not taken to consolidate and develop this topic. The self-assessment report is very descriptive and broadly reflects the provision. However, some of the strengths identified are overstated and the weaknesses identified at reinspection are not included in the self-assessment report.

**Construction, planning and the built environment****Grade 2**

Contributory areas:	Number of learners	Contributory grade
<b>Construction crafts</b>		<b>2</b>
Apprenticeships for young people	9	2

44. NITAL provides construction training for nine learners on electrical installation programmes. Of these, eight are advanced apprentices and one is an apprentice. The typical duration of advanced apprenticeships and apprenticeships is four years and two years respectively. Learners are all employed with one of nine companies. Recruitment is through company referral, Connexions and directly by the provider. Learners attend Northampton, Tresham or Peterborough colleges of further education one day a week to study for the technical certificate. The remainder of the time is spent in the workplace working towards the NVQ. College staff visit the workplace for assessment purposes and to carry out internal verification. Key skills are delivered and assessed in the provider's training centre by NITAL's staff. Induction and initial assessment are carried out by NITAL's staff, who also visit the colleges on a weekly basis to monitor learners' progress. The provider's training officer visits the workplace to carry out progress reviews every 12 weeks.

*Strengths*

- good success rates
- good practical skills developed by learners
- particularly effective support for learners

*Weaknesses*

- insufficient co-ordination of on- and off-the-job training
- insufficient reinforcement of equality at reviews

**Achievement and standards**

45. Success rates are now good. Since the previous inspection, four advanced apprentices have left the programme, of whom three completed the advanced apprenticeship framework. Two apprentices have left and both completed the framework.

46. The standard of learners' work is good. Portfolios are well compiled and are presented to a good standard. Evidence is good and sufficient in content. It is diverse and well cross-referenced to the NVQ standards. Most learners take a pride in their portfolio. The provider has put much effort in improving retention and achievement and the standard of learners' work. Learners are now making satisfactory progress and are on target to achieve in the planned timescale. However, overall recording and monitoring of learners' progress is not systematically carried out.

47. Since the previous inspection NITAL has taken responsibility for the delivery and assessment of key skills in the training centre. Attainment of key skills is satisfactory and improving.

## The quality of provision

48. Learners are developing good practical skills in the workplace and are enhancing their skills. Employers provide a wide range of tasks for learners to practise their skills and develop their expertise. Learners work on highly skilled tasks sometimes with the minimum of supervision. For example, one learner was involved in the installation of the latest technology in mixing and blending chemicals, which involved the use of programmable logic control technology to control the process. Another learner who had only been on programme for four months, was interpreting complex electrical circuit diagrams and wiring control panels with the minimum of supervision and assistance.

49. There is particularly effective support for learners. Learners are visited in the workplace every 12 weeks for a progress review. Learners who have additional needs are visited every four to six weeks. Informal visits and telephone contact are frequent and learners and employers speak highly of this improved support. Training officers have arranged visits to the workplace for assessment and reviews at times to suit shift patterns and weekend working. Three learners have been placed, on a temporary basis, with other companies so that they can cover the range of skills and tasks required by the NVQ, and are now progressing well. One learner has been provided with transport from his home to the training centre to attend key skills training.

50. Progress reviews are satisfactory. Since the previous inspection, there has been an improvement in standards. Reviews now cover all aspects of the training programme and there is some good target-setting. Action plans are developed and employers are fully involved in the process. Employers are aware of their responsibility in workplace training to enable the targets to be met. Health and safety is an agenda item and is satisfactorily reinforced.

51. Assessment and verification are satisfactory. Qualified assessors visit the workplace to observe practical tasks being carried out by learners. Use is also made of employers and workplace supervisors who provide witness testimonies. Assessment and verification is a formative process and it is fair and accurate. Assessment visits are planned with the learner and the employer. However, the task to be assessed is not always planned and there is sometimes a reliance on the work the learner is carrying out at the time.

52. NITAL adequately monitors the literacy and numeracy needs of learners. Learning needs are identified during an initial assessment and at induction. Qualified staff in the training centre provide support. Learners are given dates to attend for individual or group support sessions. Additional support is also provided in the workplace by training advisers. Learners have access to information and communications technology equipment in the form of laptop computers to support their learning.

53. There is insufficient co-ordination of on- and off-the-job training. Employers do not always know what is carried out at college and the college is not always aware of the training programmes in the workplace. In some cases, learners have had to duplicate tasks. It is often left to the learner to match the tasks available in the workplace to the requirement of the NVQ. There is little systematic planning and co-ordination. Schemes of work and schedules of practical tasks and NVQ requirements are not routinely shared with employers. Site diaries are used by learners, but they are not always used to plan the off-the-job training.

54. There is poor reinforcement of equality issues at progress reviews. Equality of opportunity is an agenda item and topics are raised with learners. However, the questions are superficial and do not effectively check the learners' understanding or allow for development of their knowledge. The provider has a bank of questions but these were not used in the observed reviews. Little time is given for learners to respond and demonstrate their understanding of the subject.

### **Leadership and management**

55. Success rates have improved since the previous inspection. Monitoring of learners' progress and success are now effectively carried out. Key aspects of training are quality assured by managers. Assessment and verification are satisfactory. Learners' views on their training are effectively collected and analysed. Equality of opportunity is effectively introduced at induction, but is not sufficiently reinforced at reviews. NITAL communicates well with employers through regular visits to the workplace and all employers are involved in progress reviews. All staff were involved in the self-assessment process. The self-assessment report identified most of the strengths but did not identify the weaknesses.

