

# INSPECTION REPORT

## **WS Training Limited**

**07 September 2006**



ADULT LEARNING  
INSPECTORATE

## **Adult Learning Inspectorate**

The Adult Learning Inspectorate (ALI) was established under the provisions of the *Learning and Skills Act 2000* to bring the inspection of all aspects of adult learning and work-based learning within the remit of a single inspectorate. The ALI is responsible for inspecting a wide range of government-funded learning, including:

- work-based learning for all people aged over 16
- provision in further education colleges for people aged 19 and over
- **learnirect** provision
- Adult and Community Learning
- training funded by Jobcentre Plus
- education and training in prisons, at the invitation of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Prisons
- adult information, advice and guidance services (**nextstep**).

Inspections are carried out in accordance with the Common Inspection Framework by teams of full-time inspectors and part-time associate inspectors who have knowledge of, and experience in, the work which they inspect. All providers are invited to nominate a senior member of their staff to participate in the inspection as a team member.

### **Pre-inspection analysis**

The resources allocated to a cycle 2 inspection are primarily determined by the findings from the previous inspection. Account is also taken of information about achievement and retention obtained from the funding body, and any significant changes in the size or scope of the provision.

Where a provider has received good grades in cycle 1, the cycle 2 inspection is relatively light. If the provider offers a number of areas of learning, a restricted sample is inspected.

Where a provider has received satisfactory grades in cycle 1, the cycle 2 inspection is less intensive and it is possible that not all areas of learning are included.

Where there are significant unsatisfactory grades from cycle 1, the intensity of the cycle 2 inspection is broadly the same as cycle 1, and all significant areas of learning are inspected.

Providers that have not previously been inspected will receive a full inspection.

## Overall effectiveness

The grades given for areas of learning and leadership and management will be used to arrive at a judgement about the overall effectiveness of the provider.

An **outstanding** provider should typically have leadership and management and at least half of the areas of learning judged to be a grade 1. All area of learning grades will be graded 1 or 2.

A **good** provider should have leadership and management and at least half of the area of learning grades judged to be a grade 2 or better. A good training provider should not have any grade 4s, and few grade 3s in the areas of learning.

A **satisfactory** provider should have adequate or better grades in leadership and management and in at least two thirds of the area of learning grades. An adequate provider might have a range of grades across areas of learning, some of which might be graded 4.

Provision will normally be deemed to be **inadequate** where more than one third of the area of learning grades and/or leadership and management are judged to be inadequate.

The final decision as to whether the provision is inadequate rests with the Chief Inspector of Adult Learning.

## Grading

Inspectors use a four-point scale to summarise their judgements about the quality of provision in occupational/curriculum areas and Jobcentre Plus programmes, as well as to summarise their judgements about the quality of learning sessions. The same scale is used to describe the quality of leadership and management, which includes equality of opportunity and quality assurance. The descriptors for the four grades are:

- *grade 1 - outstanding*
- *grade 2 - good*
- *grade 3 - satisfactory*
- *grade 4 - inadequate*

# INSPECTION REPORT

## WS Training Limited

### Contents

#### Summary

Description of the provider	1
Overall effectiveness	1
Key challenges for WS Training Limited	2
Grades	2
About the inspection	3
What learners like about WS Training Limited	5
What learners think WS Training Limited could improve	5

#### Detailed inspection findings

Leadership and management	6
Equality of opportunity	7
Quality improvement	9
Engineering and manufacturing technologies	11
Retail and commercial enterprise	15
Business administration and law	18

## INSPECTION REPORT

### DESCRIPTION OF THE PROVIDER

1. WS Training Limited (WST) is a private limited company based in Bury St. Edmunds that provides work-based learning for young people and adults in Suffolk, Norfolk and Cambridgeshire through contracts with those county's Learning and Skills Councils (LSC). Suffolk is the co-ordinating LSC.

2. WST was established in 1995 and has three training centres, one in Haverhill, another in Bury St Edmunds and a centre in Ipswich. The company offers work-based learning for young people and adults in construction, engineering and manufacturing, business administration, customer service and management (including insurance and accounts), information and communications technology (ICT), retailing, telesales, distribution and warehousing, cleaning and transportation. Most of the training takes place at the training centres, but off-the-job training also takes place at three colleges and at employers' premises. The company also has a commercial division, which accounts for 44 per cent of its business and provides a wide range of training to companies and individuals across the whole of the UK.

3. WST employs 23 staff, including the chief executive, to deliver its work-based learning contracts. The chief executive has overall responsibility for government-funded training. Since the previous inspection, the company has been restructured. The assistant chief executive role is now carried out by a quality improvement and performance manager, training and quality assurance manager and a training and employment manager.

4. WST has 433 learners on work-based learning programmes. Thirty-two of these are in areas not included in this inspection. Of the remaining learners, 239 are apprentices and 144 are advanced apprentices. Eighteen are on other work-based learning programmes. All of the learners are employed in businesses across Suffolk, Norfolk and Cambridgeshire.

### OVERALL EFFECTIVENESS

#### Grade 2

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

6. **The inspection team had a high degree of confidence in the reliability of the self-assessment process.** WST produced its most recent self-assessment report in May 2006. Staff, employers and learners were involved in the process. In most cases the report accurately identified the strengths and weaknesses that the inspectors found and it is generally self-critical and evaluative. It provides a good basis for quality improvement. WST has produced a comprehensive development plan and it reviews and updates this regularly.

7. **The provider has demonstrated that it is in a good position to make improvements.** WST's approach to quality improvement is reflected in the improved grade profile since the

previous inspection in 2002. The company has improved success rates across all the areas of learning and made good use of performance management to rectify problems or concerns. A quality group meets monthly to discuss the training programmes and identify actions, demonstrating good management of the quality systems to improve training.

**KEY CHALLENGES FOR WS TRAINING LIMITED:**

- maintain the good success rates in most areas of learning
- improve success rates for engineering apprentices
- continue the development of strong partnerships with employers
- increase the literacy, numeracy and language support arrangements
- fully implement the quality assurance arrangements
- further develop equal opportunities monitoring arrangements
- share good assessment practice and progress records

**GRADES**

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

Grades awarded at inspection

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

Engineering and manufacturing technologies			3
Contributory areas:	Number of learners	Contributory grade	
<b>Engineering</b> Apprenticeships for young people	78	3	
<b>Manufacturing technologies</b> Apprenticeships for young people	25	3	
<b>Printing</b> Apprenticeships for young people	5	3	
<b>Transportation</b> Apprenticeships for young people	9	3	

<b>Retail and commercial enterprise</b>		<b>2</b>
<b>Contributory areas:</b>	<b>Number of learners</b>	<b>Contributory grade</b>
<b>Retailing and wholesaling</b> Apprenticeships for young people	13	2
<b>Call centre operations</b> Apprenticeships for young people	43	2
<b>Warehousing and distribution</b> Apprenticeships for young people	20	2

<b>Business administration and law</b>		<b>2</b>
<b>Contributory areas:</b>	<b>Number of learners</b>	<b>Contributory grade</b>
<b>Accounting and finance</b> Apprenticeships for young people	76	2
<b>Administration</b> Apprenticeships for young people	64	2
<b>Business management</b> Apprenticeships for young people	16	2
<b>Marketing and sales</b> Apprenticeships for young people	10	2
<b>Customer service</b> Apprenticeships for young people	41	2

## ABOUT THE INSPECTION

8. The inspectors inspected, graded and reported on three areas of learning, including engineering, manufacturing technologies, retail and commercial enterprise, and business administration and law. The training in cleaning and ICT were not inspected due to the low numbers of learners in training.

Number of inspectors	5
Number of inspection days	17
Number of learners interviewed	41
Number of staff interviewed	24
Number of employers interviewed	16
Number of locations/sites/learning centres visited	20

## Leadership and Management

### Strengths

- particularly well-managed company growth

## WS TRAINING LIMITED

- very effective marketing and promotion of training
- very good and wide-ranging staff development
- very effective equal opportunities training
- very good understanding of equality and diversity by learners
- very good use of performance monitoring to improve quality

### **Weaknesses**

- insufficient monitoring of equal opportunities practices
- late implementation of some aspects of the quality assurance arrangements

## **Engineering and manufacturing technologies**

### *Strengths*

- good success rates for advanced apprentices
- good on-the-job training
- particularly effective support for learners

### *Weaknesses*

- poor success rates for engineering apprenticeships
- insufficient recording of learners' progress
- insufficient provision of literacy, numeracy, and language support for some learners

## **Retail and commercial enterprise**

### *Strengths*

- good success rates
- very effective approach to assessment
- particularly effective working relationships with employers

### *Weaknesses*

- no significant weaknesses were identified

## **Business administration and law**

### *Strengths*

- good success rates for customer service and administration learners
- very effective assessment
- good productive partnerships with employers

### *Weaknesses*

- no significant weaknesses were identified



## **WHAT LEARNERS LIKE ABOUT WS TRAINING LIMITED:**

- 'earning while learning'
- the training is vocational and an opportunity to gain a valid qualification
- 'assessors are very helpful...you can contact them at any time by phone or text...they help with the set questions'
- 'I like doing the projects and being stretched'
- 'our work supervisor is very good at passing us relevant work'
- 'action plans are good - they set out everything we need to do'
- 'it's good that you can work at our own pace and the assessor breaks down the work into manageable pieces'

## **WHAT LEARNERS THINK WS TRAINING LIMITED COULD IMPROVE:**

- 'to be informed of progress'
- the number of assessors in the workplace
- the learning materials - they need updating
- 'some more tips on how to do things better'
- 'it's difficult to get time off work for the NVQ'

## DETAILED INSPECTION FINDINGS

### LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

**Grade 2**

#### Strengths

- particularly well-managed company growth
- very effective marketing and promotion of training
- very good and wide-ranging staff development
- very effective equal opportunities training
- very good understanding of equality and diversity by learners
- very good use of performance monitoring to improve quality

#### Weaknesses

- insufficient monitoring of equal opportunities practices
- late implementation of some aspects of the quality assurance arrangements

9. WST has expanded since its previous inspection in 2002. The company has managed its growth particularly well. Its financial management is very good and it manages its resources sensibly and effectively. Its growth has been totally supported by the income it has generated. Between 2002 and 2005 its turnover increased by around 40 per cent. WST maintains a good and stable balance between its commercial work and government-funded training. Business planning is well established, effective and realistic. Managers and staff have a very good understanding of the company's goals and mission. The business plan is strongly linked to the three-year development plan and the self-assessment report. The company has a coherent plan for continued growth that takes account of its strengths and weaknesses. WST has resisted expanding too far geographically, acknowledging the difficulty it would face in maintaining the quality of its training programmes. Internal communication is very good, as are working relationships between staff. WST maximises the use of its resources. Its three training centres are in regular use and it pays good attention to maintaining appropriate workloads for staff.

10. WST markets and promotes its training programmes very effectively. It has excellent and well-established links with external partners, including employers. The chief executive chairs the local provider network group and sits on a number of other external groups that are influencing the future development of work-based learning. WST uses these links effectively to raise its profile and promote its training programmes. Recently it has successfully expanded its work-based learning to include contracts with Norfolk and Cambridgeshire LSCs. It used its strong links with employers, developed through its commercial work, to offer a very successful employer training programme. It is now part of a consortium which has successfully bid for a Train to Gain contract. The company makes very good use of telesales and targets its marketing effectively. There is particularly good sharing of information between the commercial and government-funded sections of the company so that the work-based learning is integrated effectively with the commercial training.

11. Staff development is very good and wide ranging. Managers use annual appraisals

and six-monthly reviews well to identify training needs and to carry out a full review of job descriptions. Each month the company monitors the continuous professional development of staff and encourages all staff to take advantage of the training opportunities available to them. All assessors hold or are working towards the technical certificates and key skills required by the apprenticeship framework in their occupational area. Assessors who provide individual coaching to learners are working towards qualifications in training and development. Senior managers and the chief executive have made very effective use of a life coach to help them to develop their skills and deal effectively with the challenges of their individual roles. The company uses monthly team meetings particularly effectively to identify and share good practice. It records and stores examples of good practice in files so that all staff can make use of them. The company carries out an annual satisfaction survey of all staff to collect their feedback. It analyses the results and uses them to produce an action plan to help to improve staff morale and resolve any problems. WST values its staff and recognises the contribution they make to the success of its learners.

12. Initial advice and guidance are satisfactory. Recruitment staff place learners on appropriate programmes that in most cases accurately match their career aspirations, job roles and current skills. WST makes good use of skill scans and assessors promote training opportunities as they arise.

13. WST has a satisfactory management information system. Data is accurate and the company collects it in a timely way. Managers have access to appropriate reports which help them to make sound decisions. However, there is less effective sharing of management information with assessors, who are not always aware, for example, of current success rates.

14. The company has a satisfactory strategy for the development of learners' literacy, numeracy and language skills. All learners receive an initial assessment of their literacy and numeracy skills, followed by a diagnostic test to identify gaps in their skills and knowledge. However, there has been less successful identification of the English for speakers of other languages (ESOL) needs of some engineering apprentices. Two members of staff hold qualifications in supporting adult learners, one at level 2 and one at level 3. All assessors hold or are working towards key skills at level 3. However, no member of staff holds a qualification at level 4 in supporting adults with literacy and numeracy needs.

### **Equality of opportunity**

### **Contributory grade 2**

15. WST provides its staff with very effective in-house equal opportunities training. Staff have a very good knowledge and understanding of equality and diversity. The company gives good, close attention to equality and diversity as a standing agenda item at monthly vocational staff meetings. There is a strong focus on specific subjects or new developments for consideration. WST provides its staff with useful updates on any legislation changes and gives them advice on additional learning needs and difficulties. It tests staff on their knowledge through quizzes and questionnaires and issues them with guidance and materials. A member of staff attends regular training sessions as part of the work-based learning network and LSC-linked events to develop the company's equality and diversity knowledge and understanding. The company communicates learning from external organisations to all staff and makes good use of information available on good practice websites.

16. Learners have a very good understanding of equality and diversity. Induction is memorable and the use of a DVD presenting equal opportunities dilemmas has a positive effect on learners. The company reinforces learners' knowledge and understanding of equality and diversity during progress reviews and learners are able to use equal opportunities terminology accurately and appropriately. WST also uses learners as a resource and a learner gave a presentation to the staff team regarding additional support for a specific medical condition. Learners are confident and able to recall complaints procedures and make use of them if necessary. WST keeps records of complaints, which tend to reflect concerns with employers, rather than with training. All learners are issued with a copy of a learner handbook, which details WST's commitment to equality and diversity and outlines the complaints and appeals procedure. A learner charter has recently been devised which informs learners of their rights and responsibilities during their training. The assessor gives each learner a useful booklet aimed at young learners entitled 'equal opportunities' and discusses its contents with them. Learners also receive a directory of helpful contact numbers. Employers receive a 'mentor handbook', which states WST's commitment to equal opportunities and the expectation of employers' commitment.

17. WST has satisfactory written equal opportunities and diversity policies and procedures, which it reviews and updates annually. The most recent version was produced in October 2005. It complies with legislative requirements relating to people with disabilities and other under-represented groups, but it does not make reference to actual legislation. The implementation plan clearly sets out the roles and responsibilities of staff and learners and includes useful definitions of terms. The policy deals with such issues as harassment and bullying. It also covers all aspects of staff recruitment, selection, promotion and training.

18. As an addition to its health and safety policy, WST has recently developed a policy which relates to the safety of young people, particularly 14-16 year olds engaged in vocational training. A draft LSC-wide agreement has been developed in consultation with other work-based learning providers that includes reference to child protection and which links appropriately to local authority procedures. The company makes good use of an employment law consultancy service to check policies and procedures, and it updates staff of recent changes to relevant legislation. The chief executive has overall responsibility for equal opportunities and diversity. WST has established effective measures to ensure that subcontractors comply with its requirements.

19. All WST's offices are accessible to people with mobility difficulties. The Bury St. Edmunds site has ground-floor access and appropriate training is made available to disabled learners. The Ipswich office is fully accessible and the Haverhill office also provides appropriate access and has a lift to all floors within the building. The company has purchased aids and adaptive technology to meet the needs of individual learners as the need has arisen. WST has gained the Positive About Disabled People symbol from Jobcentre Plus.

20. The monitoring of equal opportunities practices is insufficient. Learners' reviews of progress cover questions regarding equality of opportunity from a bank of questions, but no records of learners' responses are included on the forms. WST collects equal opportunities data and identifies trends, but the company does not take follow-up action.

The company pays considerable attention to health and safety, and it takes action to deal with employers' weak or poor practice, but it pays insufficient attention to employers' equal opportunities practice. Before taking learners from WST, employers sign a training provider agreement, which states the requirement to commit to promoting equality of opportunity. However, the company does not request employers' policies and procedures and there are no guarantees that employers share WST's equality and diversity values and ethos. There is no promotional material depicting learners in non-traditional roles, or positive images of young people in training and employment displayed at the main training centres. The staff profile broadly reflects the community that it serves. Current learner participation rates for under-represented groups are satisfactory and just above the LSC averages.

### **Quality improvement**

### **Contributory grade 2**

21. WST has well-established and comprehensive arrangements for quality assurance. The company recently created the new role of quality adviser to support the existing quality assurance and support services manager. A further new role of improvement and performance manager was created in April 2006 to increase the company's focus on, and resources for, quality improvement. A handy-sized quality assurance manual contains all the policies, procedures and blank forms required by staff to carry out their various roles. A quality assurance group meets monthly to discuss the training programmes and identify actions for improvement. WST has drawn up a quality assurance cycle which identifies and plans the various parts of its quality assurance arrangements.

22. WST makes very good use of performance monitoring to improve the quality of its training programmes. The monitoring by senior managers of the company's performance against the targets in its LSC contract is particularly thorough. Senior managers use a balance score-card system effectively to monitor the company's performance against a number of key performance indicators. The performance indicators include observations of the quality of training and reviews, timelines of review visits, learner satisfaction and overall success rates. The company is showing good progress in meeting increasingly challenging targets in these areas. Managers monitor the performance of individual staff closely and provide effective support as appropriate. The company accurately identifies weaker performing training programmes and targets its resources towards improving success rates. For example, it carried out a research project to try to identify why success rates for engineering apprentices had declined. The company has taken very effective action to improve the quality of the information technology (IT) training programmes which have continued to improve following a satisfactory reinspection in 2003. Currently, overall success rates for the IT apprenticeship programmes are 83 per cent. WST has reduced the number of learners who have exceeded their standard length of stay from 13 per cent to 7 per cent. Another recent initiative has been the review of the audit system for learners' files, which now includes awarding each file a grade for the quality of its content rather than just checking that it is complete. WST collects much feedback from learners and employers, which it carefully collates and analyses before presenting it to staff at team meetings. The company follows up individual comments made by employers thoroughly and resolves problems effectively and promptly. However, it does not use the results so successfully to identify overall trends or common themes.

23. Internal verification is satisfactory. Internal verification procedures are thorough, well documented and easily meet awarding body requirements. Records of internal verification are clear and include helpful suggestions to improve assessors' performance.

Internal verification includes interviews with learners and checks on the progress they are making. Teams of assessors meet regularly to agree the standards for assessment and to share good practice. Internal verifiers use very good exercises during the team meetings to illustrate good and poor practice, and help assessors to develop their assessment skills.

24. The monitoring of subcontractors is largely satisfactory and has been strengthened and improved recently. Managers check compliance with service level agreements regularly and there is frequent and thorough reporting of learners' progress.

25. Some aspects of the quality assurance arrangements have not yet been fully implemented. An annual review and monitoring of the quality of training planned for July was not carried out, even though inconsistencies in the monitoring and co-ordination of training in the workplace was identified in the company's most recent self-assessment report. There are regular and effective observations of the quality of training provided by WST and of progress reviews. However, WST has not implemented a system for the quality assurance of the training that employers provide employers. Inspectors at the previous inspection in 2002 had identified this weakness. Employer questionnaires have not been sent out this year, although the quality assurance cycle states that they should be used annually each July.

26. The company's most recent self-assessment report was produced in May 2006 and it is largely accurate. Self-assessment is an established and valued part of the company's quality improvement arrangements. The report includes the views of employers, learners and staff. Individual staff have a good knowledge of the content of the final report. Data is used to support judgements on achievement. In most cases, the report accurately identified the strengths and weaknesses that inspectors found, although some strengths claimed were no more than normal practice. The report is judgemental and self-critical and provides a good basis for quality improvement. WST has produced a comprehensive development plan in response to the findings in the self-assessment report and it reviews and updates this regularly.

## AREAS OF LEARNING

### Engineering and manufacturing technologies

Grade 3

Contributory areas:	Number of learners	Contributory grade
<b>Engineering</b> Apprenticeships for young people	78	3
<b>Manufacturing technologies</b> Apprenticeships for young people	25	3
<b>Printing</b> Apprenticeships for young people	5	3
<b>Transportation</b> Apprenticeships for young people	9	3

27. WST provides training in engineering and manufacturing technologies at level 2 and 3 national vocational qualification (NVQ). There are currently 117 learners on engineering and manufacturing programmes. Of these, 25 learners are in engineering, 25 in manufacturing technologies, five in printing and nine are in transportation apprenticeships. There are 52 advanced apprenticeships and one NVQ learner in engineering. The typical duration of apprenticeship and advanced apprenticeship programmes is two and four years respectively. WST carried out an initial assessment and induction to the training programme, which it uses to identify the most suitable programme for the learners and also to identify any additional support required. WST provides any additional support. All learners are employed. Off-the-job training for the technical certificate and key skills is carried out at an employer's premises for engineering machinist learners. Those learners working towards the technical certificate attend West Suffolk College of further education. The rest of the learners' training period is provided at work, where they work towards completing the NVQ at level 3. A team of four qualified assessors visits the learners every four weeks to carry out progress reviews and assessment activities. Two qualified WST staff are internal verifiers for this area.

#### *Strengths*

- good success rates for advanced apprentices
- good on-the-job training
- particularly effective support for learners

#### *Weaknesses*

- poor success rates for engineering apprenticeships
- insufficient recording of learners' progress
- insufficient provision of literacy, numeracy, and language support for some learners

### **Achievement and standards**

28. There are good success rates for engineering advanced apprentices. Success rates have continually improved over the past three years, from 54 per cent in 2003-04, to 56



per cent in 2004-05 and 77 per cent in 2005-06, which is above the national average for these three years. Success rates for apprenticeships in engineering for the same period are poor. They have declined over this three-year period and have been substantially below national averages for this sector. Manufacturing apprenticeship success rates are satisfactory. Some engineering machinist apprentice learners were placed on inappropriate programmes of study. There is slow progress for some apprentices in engineering. Nineteen learners left the engineering apprenticeship programme early. WST has identified these issues as contributing to the poor success rates for engineering apprentices and has taken action to make improvements. The company monitors all apprenticeship learners on this programme each month and it takes action for those learners found to be at risk of leaving. There has been some improvement in success rates but they are still poor. However, WST has only recently taken these actions and the effect over time has yet to be realised. The standard of learners' work is satisfactory, with well-compiled and well-presented portfolios. Evidence is of sufficient quantity and quality and is of a diverse nature. For example, most portfolios contain evidence that include manufacturers' data, detailed drawings of current employer projects and quality photographs of tasks carried out.

Programme	End Year	Success Rate	No, of learners	Provider NVQ Rate	National NVQ Rate	Provider framework rate	National framework rate
Advanced Apprenticeships	2003-04	overall	13	62	57	54	46
		timely	0	0	0	0	0
	2004-05	overall	116	63	57	56	45
		timely	0	0	0	0	0
Apprenticeships	2003-04	overall	33	73	48	54	46
		timely	0	0	0	0	0
	2004-05	overall	30	53	52	47	41
		timely	0	0	0	0	0

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

### The quality of provision

29. Training at work is good. Employers provide a wide range of tasks for learners to practise and develop good practical skills. Mentors and workplace supervisors assist learners well and share their wide range of experience and skills to develop the learners' potential. On-the-job training is planned and co-ordinated. Schedules are arranged, and shared with training assessors to allow learners to experience the range of practical tasks carried out at work. Learners often work on highly skilled operations with the minimum of supervision. For example, one learner is assisting the design engineer in a research and development project for a manufacturer of medical specialist equipment. The learner has taken an active role in the project and the employer has commended him. Learners appreciate this level of responsibility and it has a high motivating effect on learners to progress.



30. Support for learners is particularly effective. Learners are visited every four weeks at work, or more frequently if necessary. Learners have the tutor/assessors' e-mail addresses and telephone numbers and can arrange additional visits. Learners appreciate this good support and have the confidence to approach assessors for help and guidance. Reviews are carried out every eight weeks, with an interim four-week action-planning session. Learners speak highly of this support and how it has a positive effect on their training. Qualified assessors observe practical tasks at work to suit the learners' shift-work patterns. Assessors visit learners in the evening and at night to review, action plan, assess and give effective support. Learners and employers state that this provides good continuity in the training programme. Some learners are given additional time within the working week for NVQ study and portfolio-building.

31. Assessment is satisfactory. Practices and procedures are fair, accurate and carried out as a formative process. WST makes use of mentors and workplace supervisors acting as witnesses to competency. Assessment and verification are planned and cover all aspects of training. The range of work-based learning programmes is satisfactory and appropriately meets the needs and interests of learners, employers and the wider community. Apprenticeships and NVQs cover engineering and manufacturing technologies and the wide and varied disciplines within those vocational areas.

32. The provision for literacy, numeracy and language support for learners is insufficient in engineering and manufacturing. Many learners on manufacturing technology apprenticeship programmes are from other European countries. They speak English as an additional language and their progress is slow. Two learners are in their own time using ICT resources and other commercial resources to improve their understanding of written English. WST has not provided support for specialist-qualified staff in this area to support ESOL learners. The company identifies additional support on initial assessment and provides effective support for some dyslexic learners. However, learners experiencing difficulty with literacy and numeracy when completing key skills work are not always informed of available specialist support. WST can arrange guidance and support on a day-release basis at its main office, but it does not promote this well to learners. There is a reliance on tutor/assessors, who are not specialists in this area of learning, to provide any required support.

33. Some assessors do not record and monitor learners' progress sufficiently. Assessment is carried out on a formative basis. There are no overall records of achievement signed by the assessor in learners' portfolios. Many elements and units have a signature appended to a piece of evidence, but there is no indication of whose signature it is or the nature of that person's position in the assessment process. Some evidence may have initials in red pen, and nothing signifies if this is the internal verifier and that the work has been verified. One tutor/assessor has a record of learners' progress but learners are unaware of this. Learners must refer to past review documents to gain information about their progress and if they are on target to achieve. The training manager does not have central records of progress and the awarding bodies recommended documents are not generally used. Learners and assessors are not always aware of what has been completed or yet to be completed to achieve in the intended timescale.

### **Leadership and management**

34. WST has made recent changes in the management structure and the training and employment manager has responsibility for engineering and manufacturing technologies.

## WS TRAINING LIMITED

WST has successfully introduced measures to improve its provision. For example, success rates for advanced apprentice engineers have shown continuous improvement. Key aspects of training are now quality assured by the training manager auditing and observing these processes. Internal verification and assessment is satisfactory. There are regular team meetings, which are well attended and minuted, although good practice is not always routinely shared at these meetings. Learners have a good understanding of equal opportunities and their rights and responsibilities are upheld. All engineering staff were involved in the company's most recent self-assessment report, which was self-critical and judgemental, and identified most of the strengths and weaknesses identified on inspection.

**Retail and commercial enterprise****Grade 2**

<b>Contributory areas:</b>	<b>Number of learners</b>	<b>Contributory grade</b>
<b>Retailing and wholesaling</b> Apprenticeships for young people	13	2
<b>Call centre operations</b> Apprenticeships for young people	43	2
<b>Warehousing and distribution</b> Apprenticeships for young people	20	2

35. WST has 76 learners on retailing and wholesaling, call centre operations, and warehousing and distribution programmes. There are 14 advanced apprentices and 62 apprentices. All learners are employed. WST has two employers that have national sites with assessment support across a number of counties in England and Scotland, in addition to the Suffolk area. There is a team of five full-time staff. WST provides formal induction workshops for all learners. These take place at work for the national employers and locally at the Suffolk locations. Assessors provide on-site coaching support for the delivery of the technical certificate. Assessment takes place at work. The occupational manager is responsible for the daily operational delivery of the programme for all learners and is supported by a team of four assessors.

*Strengths*

- good success rates
- very effective approach to assessment
- particularly effective working relationships with employers

*Weaknesses*

- no significant weaknesses were identified

**Achievement and standards**

36. Learners develop good personal and vocational skills. They are developing good interpersonal skills and are using their own initiative more freely. Some learners are completing extremely complex projects at work that are linked to their learning programme. This approach is adding value to their organisation. For example, one employer has worked with the WST assessor to devise an activity to research and compare competitors, which is designed to equip the learners with a deeper understanding of the industry in which they work and be better able to sell their products and services to customers. WST has linked this effectively to the key skill requirements of the learners' framework. A retail learner has received a medal for excellence certificate from the awarding body for the effort and determination shown in completing her qualification.

37. There are good success rates for the overall apprenticeship framework in all contributory areas. WST has successfully implemented improvement strategies since the previous inspection to increase its achievement rates. Success rates for learners have increased dramatically from 32 per cent in 2003-04 to 71 per cent in 2005-06, which is

considerably above the national average rate. All elements of the framework are being integrated with the programme and completed simultaneously. Current learners are making satisfactory progress and many of them are due to achieve early.

Programme	End Year	Success Rate	No, of learners	Provider NVQ Rate	National NVQ Rate	Provider framework rate	National framework rate
Advanced Apprenticeships	2003-04	overall	12	50	31	50	21
		timely	13	46	19	46	13
	2004-05	overall	6	0	31	0	22
		timely	7	0	22	0	15
Apprenticeships	2003-04	overall	34	38	45	32	32
		timely	35	6	24	6	18
	2004-05	overall	70	40	45	36	35
		timely	68	4	30	1	23

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

### The quality of provision

38. The approach to assessment is very effective. Initial assessment is well structured and the allocated assessor carried it out at the learners' workplace. Learners' literacy and numeracy needs are explored using a diagnostic tool and they are made aware of their results. The assessor discusses any coaching support required and provides learners with the appropriate workbook if a development need is identified. WST's assessors have been trained to effectively support learners requiring additional help for key skills. WST has a dedicated literacy and numeracy expert who supports the assessment team if the need arises. Learners can choose to visit their local WST site for individual coaching or receive coaching at work. Learners complete a comprehensive self-assessment at the beginning of the programme that records their expectations of the apprenticeship programme. Assessment visits are completed every four weeks. They are well planned and link directly to previous action plans. Assessors complete comprehensive and extremely detailed records of assessment activity. Assessment uses evidence across all components of the framework to reduce duplication of activity. Learners' portfolios are well presented and contain clear and detailed evidence gathered through wide-ranging activities at work. Learners take great pride in their work. Their portfolios are well organised and cross-referenced clearly. However, not all spelling errors are corrected in the feedback from the assessor.

39. Partnerships with employers are particularly effective. A wide variety of employers are working with WST to develop their workforce using apprenticeship programmes. Employers are recruited by the sales executive, who makes initial contact and explains the learning programme available. Employers receive an induction pack to support a verbal explanation of the programme provided by the assessor. This approach enables the employer to gain knowledge about the learners' qualifications. Employers are actively involved in progress reviews. Employers are fully engaged in the activities the learners

must complete at work and provide them with good opportunities for personal and practical skill development. Some employers integrate the apprenticeship programmes into their ongoing organisation development programmes. Learners are offered job rotation to develop their skills at work. For some employers, WST is the provider of choice. The company has built strong and effective partnerships to develop its staff. One employer based in Suffolk has opened up the learning programme to all of its eligible employees across its sites and supports learners in Coventry, Nottingham, Derne Valley and Scotland.

40. WST's resources are satisfactory. It is carrying out further development of support materials for warehousing learners to better support their knowledge and understanding for the occupational area. There are a range of WST question sheets used to test their knowledge and understanding for retail, sales and telesales. All assessors have company mobile telephones so that learners can contact them. Training sites are well equipped with modern facilities and provide good access to ground-floor training rooms. Training rooms are large and well furnished with electronic projection equipment.

41. Learners' progress reviews are satisfactorily completed every eight weeks and WST uses them to inform employers and learners of achievements and to link into ongoing action plans. Learners are fully involved in the process of discussing and recording their own achievements and agreeing action points. Action plans are timebound and relevant. WST uses a percentage system to inform learners of their achievement for each element of their learning programme. Mentors at the learners' workplace are fully involved in progress reviews. Assessors check the welfare of the learner at all visits. They also review health and safety and equality of opportunity, although this aspect is not always recorded adequately.

### **Leadership and management**

42. Internal verification is satisfactory. The external verifiers state that it is fully compliant with regulatory requirements. Learners are interviewed at work. Their portfolios of evidence are systematically checked throughout the learning programme. There is an established system to provide observation of the assessment team in the field. Staff regularly complete occupational updating.

43. The promotion of equality of opportunity in this area of learning is satisfactory. Learners receive information on equality of opportunity issues at induction, including WST's policy and the grievance and appeals procedures. The learners' understanding of equality and diversity is satisfactory, although some learners display a more comprehensive knowledge of issues based on their own personal experience or training delivered by their employer. Assessors use a bank of questions to check learners' understanding but do not record answers.

44. Learners' support for literacy and numeracy is good, with well-qualified staff providing coaching and individual support.

45. The company's most recent self-assessment report was accurate in identifying many of the strengths confirmed during inspection.

**Business administration and law****Grade 2**

<b>Contributory areas:</b>	<b>Number of learners</b>	<b>Contributory grade</b>
<b>Accounting and finance</b> Apprenticeships for young people	76	2
<b>Administration</b> Apprenticeships for young people	64	2
<b>Business management</b> Apprenticeships for young people	16	2
<b>Marketing and sales</b> Apprenticeships for young people	10	2
<b>Customer service</b> Apprenticeships for young people	41	2

46. WST provides apprenticeships and NVQ training in accounting and finance, administration, business management, customer service, and marketing and sales. There are 207 learners, of whom 38 are apprentices and 23 are advanced apprentices in accounting and finance, with 15 learners working towards an NVQ at level 4. Sixty-four learners are on administration programmes, including 41 apprentices and 23 advanced apprentices. There are 16 business management learners, with 12 apprentices, three advanced apprentices and one on an NVQ at level 3 programme. The 10 marketing and sales learners include eight apprentices and two advanced apprentices. The 41 customer services learners comprise 30 apprentices and 11 advanced apprentices.

47. All learners are employed. They are recruited by the companies themselves, through Connexions and by WST. They work in a wide variety of industries, including manufacturing, shipping, insurance and accountancy practices. Learners may join an apprenticeship programme at any time of the year. They are inducted by WST in their workplaces and subsequently attend a one-day induction at one of the company's training centres. Most learners attend off-the-job training provided by WST's staff. A subcontractor delivers training to accounting learners on WST's premises. Employers provide the learners with on-the-job training. A team of assessors visits learners at work, at intervals of three or more weeks, to carry out assessments and two-monthly progress reviews. Assessment occurs at work and in the training centre. There is a team of internal verifiers who verify all assessment practices.

*Strengths*

- good success rates for customer service and administration learners
- very effective assessment
- good productive partnerships with employers

*Weaknesses*

- no significant weaknesses were identified

## Achievement and standards

48. The overall success rates are good and have been well above national rates for the past three years. Success rates for advanced apprentices have increased from 41 per cent in 2003-04 to 56 per cent in 2004-05 and 55 per cent in 2005-06. Those for apprentices have risen from 61 per cent in 2003-04 to 69 per cent in 2004-05, but were 64 per cent in 2005-06. Administration and customer services learners have had success rates well above national rates for these three years. These form just over 50 per cent of current learners. Success rates for advanced apprentices in these two areas have improved from 37 per cent for both in 2003-04, to 48 per cent for administration and 65 per cent for customer services in 2004-05. Success rates for apprentices in administration rose from 67 per cent in 2003-04 to 82 per cent in 2004-05. Similarly, rates for apprentices in customer services rose from 66 per cent in 2003-04 to 73 per cent in 2004-05. Although these rates have dropped in 2005-06, they remain above the national rate. Accounting and finance programmes represent just over 36 per cent of all learners. There are equal numbers of learners in accounting and in insurance. Success rates for the very small numbers of accounting apprentices and advanced apprentices of 33 per cent were below the national rate in 2003-04, but they have risen since to well above these rates in 2004-05 and 2005-06. All learners develop good skills in their workplaces and their standards of work are appropriate to their learning goals.

Programme	End Year	Success Rate	No, of learners	Provider NVQ Rate	National NVQ Rate	Provider framework rate	National framework rate
Advanced Apprenticeships	2003-04	overall	56	50	46	41	28
		timely	0	0	0	0	0
	2004-05	overall	45	62	47	56	31
		timely	0	0	0	0	0
Apprenticeships	2003-04	overall	75	67	51	61	37
		timely	0	0	0	0	0
	2004-05	overall	76	82	56	69	45
		timely	0	0	0	0	0

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

## The quality of provision

49. Assessment is very effective. It is carefully planned, well timed and disciplined in its approach. There are monthly assessor meetings and paperwork and practices are standardised across the different areas. WST keeps very comprehensive records, with separate action-planning and feedback sheets. Learners appreciate the value of this system and state that this helps them significantly in making good progress, or in catching up when necessary. Their portfolios contain a variety of well-presented evidence. Learners take pride in their portfolios and show good understanding of the assessment requirements. Some employers give their learners real projects that are demanding and they use them to satisfy a good range of evidence requirements, including key skills.



However, there are instances where assessors had failed to correct spelling mistakes in learners' portfolios of evidence.

50. On-the-job learning is effective in all areas and learners gain good skills at work. Administration learners are not provided with off-the-job training. They make good progress through individual coaching from their assessors, supported by workbooks and independent study. Learners in other areas attend off-the-job training and gain satisfactory knowledge and understanding from these sessions and through their workbooks. Learners enjoy learning sessions, including the thorough preparation provided in the period leading up to their examinations.

51. WST's staff develop good, productive relationships with their learners' employers. Assessors visit learners every four weeks, and often more frequently. These visits are welcomed by learners, workplace supervisors and managers, who find them valuable. They appreciate the flexibility of these arrangements when necessary to meet changes in employers' or learners' needs. Despite this flexibility, most visits take place when planned. Assessors are consistent and punctual in their attendance and the rare instances of missed visits are made good very early on. There is very effective communication between assessors and all concerned with learners' workplaces. Learners, their workplace supervisors and relevant managers have a clear understanding of progress, and of what each learner is required to do to ensure their success at each stage. Employers provide the learners with support, including giving time out for learning, even in difficult circumstances. They recognise the added value that they gain from their employees' apprenticeship programmes. They support them in progressing to appropriate higher-level learning programmes. Assessors take care to ensure that optional units are chosen to meet individual learners' needs as well as those of their employers. Assessors are effective and offer good support.

52. No learners with significant additional learning needs were identified during the inspection. Although learners feel that they receive all the support that they need, there is too much reliance on self-declaration of additional needs. The good communication and strong relationships between assessors and their learners' mentors at work assist in limiting the incidence of issues that develop into problems. Learners are encouraged to contact their assessors outside of normal working hours by telephone, text or e-mail should they want advice or assistance, and many have done this. They receive good professional advice on their current and future learning programmes, as well as on how to meet their career aspirations. Learners feel free to speak directly to their assessors should they experience difficulties at work, generally with good results for themselves. Learners making slow progress benefit from firm but understanding intervention by their assessors, often in conjunction with their workplace mentors. Some learners who considered giving up their learning programmes have been retained through the effectiveness of this approach.

### **Leadership and management**

53. Learning is well managed and staff are clear as to what performance is expected of them. They are occupationally competent and benefit from frequent reviews of their need for professional development and specific skills training. They are observed and assessed at work and receive detailed formative feedback. There is not always adequate backup for assessors who leave and this sometimes has an effect on the learners. Learning resources are satisfactory and training rooms are modern, spacious, well lit and suitably



equipped.

54. Internal verification is satisfactory. Standardisation meetings are attended monthly by all assessors and internal verifiers. These meetings are used well to develop and standardise effective systems of assessment and review. All staff are kept aware of developments in equality of opportunity legislation and good practice. They understand the need for continuous improvement and are committed to providing a good service to learners and their employers. The self-assessment report was self-critical in this area of learning. However, the strengths and weaknesses identified in the self-assessment report agreed only partially with the strengths found during inspection.

