

# INSPECTION REPORT

## **Paragon and ITE Training Group**

**08 December 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

## Paragon and ITE Training Group

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## INSPECTION REPORT

### DESCRIPTION OF THE PROVIDER

1. Paragon Training (Dorset) Limited was formed in 1998. It expanded in 2003 to include Initiative Training and Enterprises Limited and in September 2006 to include Wessex Vocational Training. Paragon and ITE Training Group (Paragon) has a board of directors, with two executive managers responsible for programme delivery and business development.
2. Paragon provides work-based learning programmes in care, engineering, retailing, hairdressing, catering and hospitality, and business administration. It also provides programmes in preparation for life and work. It operates from centres in Fareham, Weymouth, Bournemouth, Poole, Weston-super-Mare and Yeovil.
3. Paragon has contracts with local Learning and Skills Councils (LSC) in Bournemouth, Poole and Dorset, Hampshire and the Isle of Wight, West of England, Wiltshire and Somerset.

### OVERALL EFFECTIVENESS

**Grade 3**

4. **The overall effectiveness of the provider is satisfactory.** Paragon's leadership and management are satisfactory, as are its approach to equality of opportunity and its arrangements for quality improvement. Provision is satisfactory in engineering, retailing and wholesaling and Entry to Employment (E2E), and good in business administration and law.
5. **The inspection team had some confidence in the reliability of the self-assessment process.** Paragon produced its annual self-assessment report in August 2006. Staff are increasingly included in the self-assessment process and contribute to the production of the self-assessment report. The views of learners and employers are reflected in the report. Inspectors agreed with some of the strengths and weaknesses identified in the report, but found the self-assessment process insufficiently self-critical. The report does not deal sufficiently with the weaknesses identified at the previous inspection, and some areas claimed as strengths were judged to be no more than normal practice.
6. **The provider has demonstrated that it has sufficient capacity to make improvements.** Paragon has made a number of improvements which benefit the learners. Some of these have not yet had time to come fully into effect.

### KEY CHALLENGES FOR PARAGON AND ITE TRAINING GROUP:

- improve success rates
- encourage change through quality improvement
- further develop the quality of training and assessment
- improve knowledge and understanding of equality and diversity

## GRADES

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

Grades awarded at inspection

<b>Leadership and management</b>		<b>3</b>
Contributory grades:		
Equality of opportunity		3
Quality improvement		3

<b>Engineering and manufacturing technologies</b>		<b>3</b>
<b>Contributory areas:</b>	<b>Number of learners</b>	<b>Contributory grade</b>
<b>Engineering</b>		<b>3</b>
Apprenticeships for young people	620	3

<b>Retail and commercial enterprise</b>		<b>3</b>
<b>Contributory areas:</b>	<b>Number of learners</b>	<b>Contributory grade</b>
<b>Retailing and wholesaling</b>		<b>3</b>
Apprenticeships for young people	97	3

<b>Preparation for life and work</b>		<b>3</b>
<b>Contributory areas:</b>	<b>Number of learners</b>	<b>Contributory grade</b>
<b>Employability training</b>		<b>3</b>
Entry to Employment	42	3

<b>Business administration and law</b>		<b>2</b>
<b>Contributory areas:</b>	<b>Number of learners</b>	<b>Contributory grade</b>
<b>Administration</b>		
Apprenticeships for young people	61	2
<b>Customer service</b>		
Apprenticeships for young people	18	2

## ABOUT THE INSPECTION

7. The inspection was carried out during a single visit to the provider. Provision in engineering, retailing and wholesaling, business administration and law, and preparation for life and work was inspected, but that in service enterprises, health and social care, and hospitality and catering was not.

Number of inspectors	9
Number of inspection days	45
Number of learners interviewed	140
Number of staff interviewed	87
Number of employers interviewed	33
Number of locations/sites/learning centres visited	84
Number of visits	1

### Leadership and management

#### Strengths

- good strategic leadership to meet local and regional needs
- particularly effective partnership working which benefits learners and employers
- good communications with staff
- good initiatives to widen participation

#### Weaknesses

- insufficiently developed arrangements for quality improvement
- insufficient reinforcement of equality and diversity

### Engineering and manufacturing technologies

#### *Engineering*

##### *Strengths*

- good standard of learners' work
- good support for learners
- good resources for marine engineering
- good partnership arrangements

##### *Weaknesses*

- poor, but improving, success rates on apprenticeship programmes
- insufficient promotion of equality and diversity in the workplace

## **Retail and commercial enterprise**

### ***Retailing and wholesaling***

#### *Strengths*

- good development of learners' personal and vocational skills
- good use of resources for assessment

#### *Weaknesses*

- insufficiently thorough induction
- insufficient planning of individual learning

## **Preparation for life and work**

### ***Employability training***

#### *Strengths*

- good achievement of learning goals
- good enrichment activities to develop personal and vocational skills
- good personal support for learners

#### *Weaknesses*

- low progression rates
- insufficient recording of learners' progress

## **Business administration and law**

#### *Strengths*

- good achievement of skills
- good matching of learners to work placements
- particularly well-managed curriculum

#### *Weaknesses*

- insufficient recording of learners' progress



## **WHAT LEARNERS LIKE ABOUT PARAGON AND ITE TRAINING GROUP:**

- the practical activities, resources and relaxed environment in off-the-job training - 'Programmes are not like school'
- the friendly staff - 'they are easy to talk to'
- good support from staff and help with personal issues - 'they deal with problems quickly'
- meeting new people and mixing with different types of people
- the activities such as conservation work, visits and trips, football tournaments
- the opportunity to learn and gain a qualification while you earn
- 'helped me get a job'
- 'I never thought I'd be where I am now when I was at school'

## **WHAT LEARNERS THINK PARAGON AND ITE TRAINING GROUP COULD IMPROVE:**

- the number of activities available in the lunch break
- facilities, computers and heating in some locations
- the length of sessions - they are too short
- the number of visits from assessors and internal verifiers to sign off units
- 'more help with indexing portfolios'
- the questions in training - they are too complicated

## DETAILED INSPECTION FINDINGS

### LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

Grade 3

#### Strengths

- good strategic leadership to meet local and regional needs
- particularly effective partnership working which benefits learners and employers
- good communications with staff
- good initiatives to widen participation

#### Weaknesses

- insufficiently developed arrangements for quality improvement
- insufficient reinforcement of equality and diversity

8. Leadership and management overall are satisfactory. Paragon has good strategic leadership that meets local and regional needs. Managers have a particularly clear view of the company's role in meeting the vocational training needs of learners in the south and southwest of England. The provider works closely with key regional and economic stakeholders to carefully identify and respond to emerging vocational training needs in its area. Directors and managers plan very carefully to set a clear direction for organisational development. Paragon also makes significant investment to improve its staffing resources in key areas of provision, and to provide good-quality physical resources to respond effectively to employers' needs

9. Paragon's good partnership working benefits learners and employers. It works closely and constructively with many employers, employers' organisations, and other providers, such as colleges, to create additional learning opportunities. It has extensive collaborative involvement in local networks and learning partnerships, for example through its work in three centres of vocational excellence (CoVE) to provide good-quality learning. It also works constructively at regional and national level to provide information on vocational training and to develop new learning programmes, for example through its involvement with the British Marine Federation and the Regional Development Agency.

10. Paragon has good internal communications. In addition to regular scheduled and minuted meetings of its managers and staff, Paragon makes effective use of a weekly e-mail message and a house magazine to keep staff informed of developments and to raise awareness of key issues affecting learners. It carries out an annual survey of staff views and takes prompt action to respond to them. Managers have an open and inclusive approach to communications, and meet staff regularly to discuss key issues affecting the organisation and learners. Staff feel their views are valued and are well motivated to help the company succeed.

11. Arrangements for staff training and development are satisfactory. Paragon has suitably experienced staff with substantial vocational expertise which benefits the learners. It has an annual appraisal process, but this is not linked to the observation of teaching and learning and does not sufficiently support the improvement of teaching and learning. The

system is currently being revised. Paragon encourages its staff to take part in further professional development, and many staff are currently taking initial teacher training programmes and additional specialist qualifications.

12. Paragon has an effective strategy and system in place for supporting learners to develop their skills in language, literacy and numeracy. Learners undergo an initial assessment of their needs using a nationally recognised test. Further diagnostic tests are used where a need is identified, and Paragon supports the learner through its own specialist staff and additional learning resources. In 2005-06, 274 learners received literacy and numeracy support.

13. The management of curriculum areas is generally satisfactory. Overall success rates for learners were previously low, but have improved to a satisfactory level. Programme managers work closely with employers to ensure that programmes meet employment needs. Training is satisfactory, and most learners make significant gains in practical, professional and personal skills. Paragon's financial monitoring arrangements are satisfactory. Resources are generally good, particularly in engineering. Significant sums have been invested in improving resources for learners. Paragon provides satisfactory value for money.

### **Equality of opportunity**

### **Contributory grade 3**

14. Paragon's promotion of equality and diversity is satisfactory, and it has good initiatives to widen participation. Through these initiatives, it offers an increasing number of new learners the opportunity to gain confidence and develop personal, social and vocational skills. Learners include young people with significant barriers to participation. Work with the traveller community and a range of taster courses attract excluded and disaffected young people into several vocational areas. The company has been particularly responsive in its work with some 42 schools across the region, and has invested in the appointment of two school liaison co-ordinators. The development of the young apprentices programme provides year 10 and 11 pupils with opportunities to build good practical skills, gain additional qualifications, and progress to further training and education. Young people are encouraged to consider vocational training through taster days and through Paragon's involvement in industry days in local schools.

15. Paragon has satisfactory policies for equality of opportunity. The equality and diversity group is responsible for the management and integration of equality and diversity across the company. The complaints procedure is carefully managed and supported by detailed reports. Staff provide learners with clear information on equality of opportunity and diversity and this is also displayed on noticeboards around the company's premises. Equality and diversity impact measures have been identified and action plans are regularly updated. However, the action plans do not focus sufficiently on helping both staff and learners develop their understanding of equality and diversity. Most actions relate to improving procedures. The company has responded to 'Every Child Matters' by providing information posters at all centres. Child protection procedures and procedures to safeguard vulnerable adults are documented adequately, and appropriate checks are carried out. Action plans to comply with the Disability Discrimination Act (1995) are in place and reasonable actions are being taken to deal with access issues.

16. Equal opportunities data is used to assess the participation levels of different groups and to set targets for the recruitment of under-represented groups, for example men into

hairdressing and women into engineering programmes. Staff in areas of learning make insufficient use of this data to monitor and evaluate progress towards the targets, or to identify trends and plan actions.

17. Learners' awareness and understanding of equality and diversity is insufficiently reinforced in training and assessment. Although equality of opportunity is introduced routinely at induction, the training and progress reviews do not help learners to develop their understanding of the subject. The company has recently introduced monthly equality and diversity discussions to promote learners' understanding and knowledge. Observations of training do not evaluate the promotion of equality and diversity in learning sessions. There is insufficient staff development to support the promotion of equality and diversity within teaching and learning. The range of staff training is limited and activities are not evaluated in order to plan a strategy for staff development in equality and diversity. The monitoring of employers' equality and diversity policies is inconsistent and the employers' handbook does not place sufficient emphasis on the practice of equality and diversity. Paragon's staff have not always challenged unsuitable display materials in work premises.

### **Quality improvement**

### **Contributory grade 3**

18. Quality improvement is satisfactory. Paragon has developed a new quality improvement policy, and is currently consolidating its quality improvement processes across the organisation, and standardising key documents. The company makes regular use of task groups to bring staff from across the organisation together to work on specific aspects of provision.

19. Since the previous inspection, Paragon has improved its initial assessment process and the support it offers in literacy, numeracy and language. It has worked to improve its resources for learners. Managers make effective use of feedback from learner focus groups to improve aspects of the provision, for example, making its information and advice on learning programmes more accessible to learners. It has also improved its use of data in management decision-making and planning.

20. Internal verification is satisfactory. Assessors, candidates and units are sampled in line with awarding body requirements. Internal verification procedures are satisfactory, and internal verifiers provide helpful feedback to assessors. There are clear indications of improving success rates in curriculum areas. The self-assessment process is generally satisfactory. Paragon has increasingly involved staff in the self-assessment process, but inspectors found that the report was not sufficiently self-critical.

21. Paragon's arrangements for quality improvement are insufficiently developed. The company recognises this, and has taken steps to deal with it. However, some of the quality improvement processes now being introduced are too complex, and are not being implemented consistently across the organisation. Some aspects of quality improvement are not yet sufficiently developed or fully implemented. Where quality improvements have been implemented, Paragon does not always monitor sufficiently their effectiveness or their effect on learners. Until recently, Paragon has not focused enough on improving the planning and delivery of training in curriculum areas. For example, Paragon's system for the observation of teaching and learning is not fully in place, and the results of observations are not monitored sufficiently to ensure the consistency of observation or feedback. Staff do not always recognise the value of the process at present in helping to

improve their performance.

## AREAS OF LEARNING

### Engineering and manufacturing technologies

Grade 3

Contributory areas:	Number of learners	Contributory grade
<b>Engineering</b>		<b>3</b>
Apprenticeships for young people	620	3

22. Paragon has 620 apprentices in engineering and manufacturing technologies. There are 105 advanced apprentices and 137 apprentices in motor vehicle, 138 advanced apprentices and 44 apprentices in engineering, and 128 advanced apprentices and 68 apprentices in marine engineering. In addition there are 114 young apprentices in motor vehicle, 35 in engineering and 59 in marine engineering. Young apprenticeship programmes were not inspected. Programmes are also offered for schools and on a commercial basis.

23. Learners are employed in a range of occupational settings, such as garages, specialist engineering companies and boat builders. They work towards a national vocational qualification (NVQ) and three wider key skills, that are assessed by observation and evidence gained in the workplace. The training and assessment for technical certificates and the three main key skills take place at various Paragon centres across Hampshire, Dorset and Somerset. Learners' progress is reviewed in the workplace at least every six weeks. The marine engineering programme has full CoVE status in two partnerships, one in the southwest and the other in the southeast of England.

### **Engineering**

#### *Strengths*

- good standard of learners' work
- good support for learners
- good resources for marine engineering
- good partnership arrangements

#### *Weaknesses*

- poor, but improving, success rates on apprenticeship programmes
- insufficient promotion of equality and diversity in the workplace

### **Achievement and standards**

24. The standard of learners' work in engineering is good. Learners appreciate the skills they are developing and their employers confirm the high standards they demonstrate in the workplace. The training in the workplace is led by skilled craftspeople, and learners carry out a wide variety of tasks. Many learners obtain higher levels of key skills than those required by their frameworks. The hand skills exhibited by learners on young apprenticeship programmes is also of a high standard.

25. Success rates on engineering apprenticeship programmes were poor, but have improved significantly. The rate was 39 per cent in 2003-04, and 32 per cent in 2004-05, but it has risen to 47 per cent in 2005-06. The success rates for advanced apprentices are generally adequate. A number of initiatives have been taken to improve the programmes, and these are beginning to affect overall success rates.

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	135	57	57	48	46
		timely	139	38	34	33	27
	2004-05	overall	143	58	57	52	45
		timely	145	47	33	43	25
Apprenticeships	2003-04	overall	148	51	48	39	32
		timely	145	18	22	12	13
	2004-05	overall	173	36	52	32	41
		timely	170	11	27	9	19

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

26. Staff and employers provide good support that contributes well to learners' development. Learners value the good rapport and understanding they have with staff, and consult them regularly on a wide range of practical, technical and personal issues. Literacy and numeracy tutors provide specialist support for learners with specific needs. For example, when one apprentice had a long period of serious illness, staff negotiated individual support with his employer and modified his programme to enable him to continue. The training is adjusted to meet the specific needs of learners, including providing learning sessions in the evening and at weekends, and training officers respond rapidly to individual learners' requests. Some employers allocate specific areas and additional resources to learners to support their learning. For example, one employer provides Sunday morning instruction classes. There is good alignment of off-the-job training with the work being carried out in the workplace to reinforce learning.

27. Resources in marine engineering are good, particularly at the Marine Skill Centre in Poole. High levels of investment have been made to develop both the accommodation and the learning resources. The equipment and workshop facilities are good enough to be used regularly by employers and for teaching specialist courses. The developments are giving a more professional image to work-based learning. For example, teaching and learning resources include commercial boats and engines for learners to work on, upholstery and other boat-building facilities, systems for planning and testing hydraulics, and cut-away models of various engine parts. All classrooms are fitted out with interactive whiteboards, laptop computers and good-quality furniture, and there are well-equipped computer suites. Paragon has a satisfactory range of resources to support learners in motor vehicle and general engineering. Assessors and internal verifiers are appropriately qualified and experienced to perform their roles. Training rooms are satisfactory, and modern computers are used to support learning in information and communications

technology.

28. The standard of teaching and learning is satisfactory. Learners receive a satisfactory induction, and staff reinforce their understanding of health and safety effectively. Learners are well informed about the structure and procedures relating to their qualification. Teaching in practical classes is satisfactory, and supporting paperwork is generally good. Practical classes allow learners to progress at their own pace towards assessment. Classes in background knowledge are planned adequately to support practical activities, and to match the work activities of most learners. Staff keep clear records of learners' progress. Workplace supervisors train learners in a wide range of engineering disciplines to meet the requirements of their NVQ. Most learners are trained in additional specialist skills, such as manual handling techniques and safe slinging practices, by their employers. Training sessions and schemes of work are planned effectively to link with seasonal work carried out by learners. For example, one topic on cooling systems was brought forward after a sudden period of cold weather led to many learners working on cooling systems at their work placements.

29. Assessment and internal verification are satisfactory. Learners have clear assessment schedules and recorded targets that are linked effectively to learning goals. Some targets are not detailed enough, but most have adequate deadlines and short-term objectives. Workplace supervisors are not routinely present at learners' progress reviews, but are asked to comment on their progress immediately afterwards. Learners' progress is monitored effectively and those whose progress is causing concern are targeted for additional support and assessment visits. Internal verification and moderation procedures are thorough and lead internal verifiers meet regularly to standardize procedure and share good practice.

### **Leadership and management**

30. Revised quality improvement procedures have recently been introduced and a common internal verification system has been adopted. Managers meet regularly, and their discussions contribute well to curriculum development in the programme area.

31. Paragon has good partnership arrangements and contacts with a wide range of engineering employers, providers, networks and other external agencies including regional development agencies. Through the CoVE arrangements, staff are closely involved with developments in the engineering sector, which improves their technical knowledge. Engineering employers, manufacturers and other organisations regularly use Paragon's facilities to hold training events and meetings, and they value their links with Paragon. Paragon works closely with employers to find placements which match learners' and employers' needs. It has particularly close links with marine employers and manufacturers in the area, which provide good opportunities in marine engineering for learners.

32. Paragon does not promote equality of opportunity sufficiently in the workplace or monitor work-placement providers' equality of opportunity policies. Staff do not use progress reviews to widen learners' knowledge and understanding of equality of opportunity, and do not always challenge employers when inappropriate material is displayed in workplaces. Some staff have a poor awareness and understanding of equality of opportunity. Their language is not sufficiently inclusive, and on occasion it is inappropriate. Staff are not sufficiently confident about tackling equality of opportunity issues with learners and employers.



**Retail and commercial enterprise****Grade 3**

<b>Contributory areas:</b>	<b>Number of learners</b>	<b>Contributory grade</b>
<b><i>Retailing and wholesaling</i></b>		<b>3</b>
Apprenticeships for young people	97	3

33. Paragon has 67 apprentices and 30 advanced apprentices on retailing and wholesaling programmes, which it offers in Dorset and Somerset. Most learners are employed when they start their programme, but a few have work placements with local retailers. Learners complete all their training in the workplace. There are seven assessors and two internal verifiers to support the programmes. Ten per cent of the learners have additional learning needs.

***Retailing and wholesaling****Strengths*

- good development of learners' personal and vocational skills
- good use of resources for assessment

*Weaknesses*

- insufficiently thorough induction
- insufficient planning of individual learning

**Achievement and standards**

34. Overall success rates for apprentices and advanced apprentices are satisfactory. Success rates for apprentices have improved from 37 per cent in 2003-04 to 50 per cent in 2005-06. Success rates for advanced apprentices are also improving, and in 2005-06 they stand at 55 per cent to date. Most current learners are making satisfactory progress and are on target to achieve their qualifications.

35. Learners develop good personal and vocational skills, and they recognise that their confidence and self-esteem have increased since starting their programme. They become valued professional members of their retail team, enabling their employer to give them more responsible roles such as visual merchandising or key holding. Learners are better able to do their jobs and interact with colleagues and customers. Some use their initiative well, and have progressed to more senior roles, such as duty manager or manager of an area within a large store. One learner who had additional learning needs is now working as a regional assistant manager and supporting stores which have staff shortages. Learners are proud of their achievements and enjoy the independence of being able to earn and learn. Fifteen per cent of learners in the last intake of apprentices progressed to an advanced apprenticeship programme.

## PARAGON AND ITE TRAINING GROUP

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	7	0	21	0	13
		timely	6	0	10	0	5
	2004-05	overall	5	20	21	20	15
		timely	5	20	13	20	9
Apprenticeships	2003-04	overall	88	36	37	31	27
		timely	76	5	18	5	14
	2004-05	overall	77	52	43	43	32
		timely	87	15	26	10	19

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

36. The provider makes good use of resources in the workplace. Assessors use good-quality digital technology to record learners' observations and capture witness statements. Personal digital assistants are used effectively to record verbal statements and witnesses' signatures contemporaneously, ensuring all evidence is valid and complete. Assessors are able to record visual evidence very effectively to accompany the learners' case studies and witness statements. This is particularly useful in very busy workplace environments. Learners have satisfactory access to the provider's website for guidance and learning materials. The provider has developed helpful learner workbooks to support the teaching of background knowledge and key skills. However, some of the questions are too difficult for learners and materials include spelling errors.

37. Learners take a satisfactory initial skills assessment, and those with identified additional learning needs receive effective support. However, learners' induction is insufficiently thorough, too assessor led, and does not involve the learners closely enough. Leaflets on health and safety, and equality and diversity are given to the learners but not used effectively to increase their understanding. Although individual learning styles are identified, they are not taken into account during induction, and too much emphasis is put on the NVQ and the contract, and not enough on understanding on the full framework requirements. Most learners understand the appeals procedures adequately, but staff do not follow up induction effectively to ensure that learners understand all of it. Learners' recollection of their induction is very poor. The reinforcement of learners' understanding of equality and diversity in the workplace is inadequate. The provider has recognised this weakness and is designing a more interactive induction process, with subsequent reinforcement, but it is too early to assess the effect of this on the learners. Learners receive adequate information and advice on their programmes to ensure their work placements and qualifications are suitable for them. Towards the end of the programme, assessors give satisfactory guidance to help learners progress to further qualifications.

38. Paragon does not plan individual learning sufficiently. Learners do not have an overall assessment plan that identifies how they will be trained and assessed throughout their programme. Training given by employers is not built into the learning plan sufficiently to

be co-ordinated with assessment activities. For example, in some cases, assessors ask the learners whether they have received enough training to complete a given target.

39. Employers' involvement in training is sometimes weak, and employers do not always contribute to learners' progress reviews or participate in the planning of future learning. Learning plans are insufficiently individualised, and do not take enough account of learners' prior achievements. Project workbooks for key skills and technical certificates are not sufficiently contextualised to learners' working environment. Targets are not always specific and measurable and are not routinely agreed with the learner. Progress reviews focus too much on recording achievement and not enough on planning medium- and longer-term targets.

### **Leadership and management**

40. Curriculum management is satisfactory. Since the previous inspection in 2004, the provider has implemented a series of initiatives to improve the quality of the provision. It has invested in recruiting new staff to the area of learning and has recently appointed a lead internal verifier.

41. Internal verification is satisfactory. A sampling schedule is planned and internal verification is discussed at team meetings. Standardisation meetings are held for each occupational area and across the organisation.

42. Communication within the area of learning team is effective. Staff meet regularly to review learners' progress and to discuss areas for development within the company. Internal communications are satisfactory although some employers said that external communications are not always effective.

43. Staff are adequately involved in the self-assessment process. Self-assessment is a fixed agenda item in the team's meetings. Inspectors agreed with some of the strengths and weaknesses identified in the self-assessment report but found further weaknesses in this area of learning.

**Preparation for life and work****Grade 3**

<b>Contributory areas:</b>	<b>Number of learners</b>	<b>Contributory grade</b>
<b><i>Employability training</i></b>		<b>3</b>
Entry to Employment	42	3

44. Currently, Paragon provides training for 42 learners on E2E programmes, 20 of whom are in Weymouth and 22 in Boscombe. Three further learners are completing their training at a recently acquired training organisation in Weston-Super-Mare.

45. Learners join the programme from school, are referred by Connexions, or are self-referred. The programme is run by a full-time programme manager, with five full-time tutors and two full-time placement officers, and is supported by a general administration team. Two half time skills for life tutors support the programme. Skills for Life is the government's strategy on training in literacy, numeracy and the use of language. E2E is for learners who are not yet ready to enter mainstream education, training and/or employment. Some learners who are identified as ready for work receive intensive jobsearch and work experience early in their training and take part in a work placement. Currently 33 per cent per cent of learners are on a work placement.

46. Learners follow a range of core options including personal and social development, information technology (IT) and literacy and numeracy. They must attend for at least 14 hours each week, on two to four days. If they are uncertain whether to commit to the E2E programme, they can take part in a taster or be referred to a pre-E2E programme with a partner organisation. Opportunities are available for learners to gain externally accredited certificates in key skills, literacy, numeracy, IT, first aid, food hygiene and health and safety, and a range of NVQ units at level 1 in childcare, hairdressing, catering and retailing.

***Employability training****Strengths*

- good achievement of learning goals
- good enrichment activities to develop personal and vocational skills
- good personal support for learners

*Weaknesses*

- low progression rates
- insufficient recording of learners' progress

**Achievement and standards**

47. E2E learners make good progress in achieving their personal learning goals. Their personal and social development is good. Their confidence and teamworking skills improve, and they achieve additional qualifications to improve their employability. In 2005-06, 43 learners achieved a health and safety certificate. Learners make good progress in literacy and numeracy particularly in listening and speaking, and in 2005-06, 34 per cent of learners gained a nationally recognised certificate. Increasing numbers of

learners achieve key skills qualifications at level 1. Learners also gain work-readiness skills, such as job interview skills early in their training. Attendance is satisfactory.

48. Progression rates into employment are low, but improving. In 2003-04, 40 per cent of learners found employment. The proportion fell to 18 per cent in 2004-05, but in 2005-06, it has risen to 29 per cent, with 11 learners still in learning. There are early indications that recent strategies to improve progression are having a marked effect, with progression in the first three-quarters of 2006-07 standing at 42 per cent. Paragon continues to support learners beyond their contracted period, and many learners have gained employment after they left their programme. Sixty-one learners from the 2005-06 intake secured employment after their funded period ended.

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

LSC funded work-based learning																	
Entry to Employment	2005-06		2004-05		2003-04												
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	
Number of starts	162		230	100	230	100											
Progression <sup>1</sup>	45		40	17	89	39											
Achieved objectives <sup>2</sup>	36		152	66	93	40											
Still in learning	11		0	0	0	0											

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

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

### The quality of provision

49. Personal support for learners is good. Staff provide a welcoming and supportive learning environment, and gain a thorough knowledge of learners' individual personal needs. Twenty-one per cent of learners have specific learning difficulties and many have multiple disadvantages. Staff work effectively with a broad range of partners including social services, housing and health agencies to deal with these. Induction to the programme is well organised, and learners are assessed for additional support needs. Some receive a regular meal at Paragon's breakfast club, and practical support with childcare and accompanied travel. Paragon provides some learners with new clothes for interviews, whites for catering, and protective clothing, footwear, and essential equipment for work placements. Effective aftercare includes follow-up telephone calls and support.

50. Paragon offers enrichment activities that develop learners' personal and vocational skills effectively. Learners enjoy their programmes, and are introduced to valuable additional experiences that meet their individual needs and enrich their knowledge and skills. For example, some learners complete four-week projects on a nearby nature reserve and others do conservation work in a local country park. Learners build effective teamwork skills in paint-ball sessions and raise money for charities by taking part in sports tournaments and swimming events. Some learners gain additional knowledge by preparing to take their driving theory tests. Learners who are unsure of their vocational direction take part in taster placements to gain useful experience of different work environments. Work placements are matched well to learners' needs and many lead to employment.

51. Teaching and learning are satisfactory overall. Induction is effective. Learners gain understanding of their programmes and the high standard of attendance, punctuality and behaviour expected of them. Literacy and numeracy are reinforced well during training sessions. In better sessions, tutors sensitively encourage learners who are resistant to learning. Tutors work together effectively and have good rapport with learners. Classroom management is good, and standards of behaviour and involvement are high. In weaker sessions, too much of the training session is led by the tutor and there is too little individualised teaching. Too few additional activities are planned for groups who have a wide range of abilities. Most portfolios of work are organised well, though the amount of evidence varies. In some portfolios, however, work is uncorrected and there are too few comments to guide or encourage learners. Equality and diversity are explored well and reinforced in lessons, though individual understanding is covered less well in reviews.

52. Teaching and learning resources are satisfactory. There are computers in most teaching rooms, and well-equipped computer suites with up-to-date software and internet access for jobsearch activities. Learners are occasionally frustrated by the lack of technical support on one site. Hair salons on two sites and a new catering facility on one site have increased the opportunities for learners to gain NVQ units and improve practical skills in a realistic work environment. Skills for life resources are much improved. Staff are creative in taking learners off site to develop their confidence, attitude and focus, and a minibus is available for these trips. Accommodation and facilities are satisfactory with adequate facilities for learners' breaks and for private discussions.

53. Assessment and internal verification are satisfactory. Initial assessment of learners' needs is satisfactory. Trained skills for life tutors conduct a range of assessments that give detailed information on learners' additional needs. Although all learners are subject to psychometric testing, learning styles assessment and job profiling, too little use is made of the results in the planning of sessions.

54. Records of progress in activity plans and reviews are insufficiently detailed. Individual learning plans include clear information on qualifications, but not on learners' interests and skills. Activity plans are not sufficiently effective in recording progress. They contain too little information about the small steps learners have achieved in sessions and work placements, and learners are unclear about how far they have travelled. The comments recorded are too broad to guide learners in what they need to do next. Key records do not always reflect the knowledge staff have of the learners' progress. For example, one learner neatened and reduced the size of his handwriting significantly, and began to write more fluently, but this was not recorded. Discussions on equality of opportunity during learners' progress reviews are not always recorded. The provider's self-assessment report identified this weakness and more training is planned.

### **Leadership and management**

55. Paragon works effectively in partnership with organisations such as Connexions, health and welfare agencies and other regional E2E providers. Within the organisation, there are regular formal team meetings from which minutes are circulated and good practice shared. Arrangements for staff development are satisfactory, as is the use of management information.

56. Learners' understanding of equality of opportunity and diversity is promoted effectively in teaching and learning, particularly in personal and social development

sessions. For example, learners experience the effect of having a sensory or physical disability.

57. Quality improvement arrangements are satisfactory and clear to all staff. Lesson observations are used to motivate staff and share good practice. From these, the provider has identified the need to improve target-setting and recording.

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

<b>Contributory areas:</b>	<b>Number of learners</b>	<b>Contributory grade</b>
<b>Administration</b> Apprenticeships for young people	61	2
<b>Customer service</b> Apprenticeships for young people	18	2

58. Paragon provides apprenticeship programmes in administration, customer service and accountancy for business learners. There are 42 apprentices and 19 advanced apprentices in business administration. In customer service, there are 17 apprentices and one advanced apprentice, and in accountancy, there are four apprentices and five advanced apprentices.

59. At the start of their programme, all learners have an interview and an assessment of their literacy and numeracy skills. They have an individual induction, either in the workplace or at Paragon's premises. Off-the-job training for key skills and technical certificates is available on a flexible basis at Paragon's centres in Yeovil, Weymouth and Bournemouth. A member of staff visits learners in the workplace every month to carry out assessments or quarterly reviews. There are three full-time assessors and one part-time assessor, and two full-time and one part-time internal verifier. Specialist trainers deliver IT and key skills support. All off-the-job training is provided by the same team.

*Strengths*

- good achievement of skills
- good matching of learners to work placements
- particularly well-managed curriculum

*Weaknesses*

- insufficient recording of learners' progress

**Achievement and standards**

60. Achievement is satisfactory. Apprenticeship success rates have risen from 28 per cent in 2003-04 to 62 per cent in 2005-06. Success rates for advanced apprenticeships have increased significantly from 11 per cent in 2004-05 to 44 per cent in 2005-06. Timely success rates show an improving trend both for apprentices and advanced apprentices, and learners currently on programme are achieving well, with many achieving units ahead of their target dates.

61. Learners are achieving good workplace skills. Supervisors and managers speak highly of learners' technical skills, particularly in computing, and many learners achieve their technical certificates early in the programme. Learners also build communication and networking skills, and improve their numeracy skills, sometimes to a higher level than that required by their qualification. Learners are well-motivated and enthusiastic, enjoy learning, and value their achievements and the opportunities to learn and reflect on their new skills and experiences.



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	25	28	46	8	28
		timely	21	5	30	0	18
	2004-05	overall	46	28	47	11	31
		timely	44	18	35	7	23
Apprenticeships	2003-04	overall	112	44	51	28	37
		timely	108	19	25	8	18
	2004-05	overall	91	54	56	40	45
		timely	86	22	35	20	28

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

62. Learners are particularly well matched to their work placements and employers. All applicants have a very thorough initial interview and are then given a detailed list of possible jobs which closely match their interests. Paragon has developed very good working relationships with employers, and employers are often willing to be flexible in their personnel specification so that learners can be considered for identified posts. All learners are given clear advice on progression routes. If a learner is unhappy with a placement, another placement is identified within six weeks.

63. Assessment is satisfactory. Assessors make regular visits to the workplace, usually once a month, and there are additional assessment opportunities when learners attend off-the-job training. Assessors regularly use a hand-held computer to capture evidence photographically or by voice recording in busy workplaces. Key skills tests are also offered in the workplace using a laptop computer. The best assessments use question and answer techniques to extend learners' knowledge. However, the action plans set after assessment are often unchallenging, and require only the routine collection of information.

64. Language, literacy and numeracy support for learners is satisfactory. It is available to all learners, either in the workplace or at Paragon's premises. Assessors offer additional visits and individual tuition, and if necessary, a member of the skills for life team offers more extensive help. One learner identified as having additional learning needs has successfully progressed to level 3 using this support.

65. Resources are satisfactory. The company has three training sites with a range of suitable accommodation. All members of staff have a personal file showing continuing professional development and all have recent industrial experience. Computing resources are satisfactory. Learners have access to a range of training materials, all of which are well produced and reflect good commercial practice.

66. Off-the-job training is satisfactory, and covers all aspects of the key skills and technical certificate requirements of the qualifications. If learners cannot attend one of Paragon's centres because it is too far for them to travel, the training is routinely provided in the

workplace by assessors. Employers provide valuable additional training in the workplace through in-house courses and on-the-job training using dedicated software.

67. Initial assessment is satisfactory. All learners have an interview and an initial assessment of their literacy and numeracy skills. The results are communicated clearly to learners and used to make the correct choice of programme and to determine the need for additional support. Induction is satisfactory, taking place either at Paragon's premises or in the workplace. Learners complete a post-induction assignment to confirm their clear understanding of the key procedures in the learning programme, including the appeals and health and safety procedures.

68. There is insufficient recording of learners' overall progress. Reviews are carried out quarterly in the workplace and any units completed or examinations passed are recorded. However, the additional skills that learners gain in the workplace are not recorded adequately in their portfolio for use in action-planning. Workplace learning is not always matched sufficiently closely to off-the-job learning. For example, some learners are unsure of the progress they are making in developing skills. Some of the targets set are not sufficiently detailed or time constrained.

### **Leadership and management**

69. The course team is small and cohesive, and meets regularly with the new team manager. There is a clear focus on the learner in meetings, and the team has developed particularly effective strategies to improve achievement. For example, training for key skills awards and technical certificates now take place early in the programme, and the programme manager has monthly meetings with assessors to monitor learners' progress and enable remedial action to be taken where necessary. These actions are having a clear effect on current success rates both for apprentices and advanced apprentices, with many learners achieving units ahead of target dates. Staff development is encouraged and all assessors and trainers keep a continuous professional development file showing the courses they have attended and their relevance to the training process. New staff are provided with effective mentoring and additional training. Internal verification is very thorough.

