

INSPECTION REPORT

Education and Training Skills

01 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*

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DESCRIPTION OF THE PROVIDER

1. Education and Training Skills (ETS) was established in 1968 to provide engineering training to support large and small companies with traditional apprenticeship programmes. ETS diversified in 2003 into administration, customer service and business management and gained Centre of Vocational Excellence (CoVE) status in April 2006 for business, in partnership with Exeter College. Training in engineering was withdrawn in 2000 and training in manufacturing ended in 2003. The current training programme focuses on business management, administration and customer service. ETS has a head office in Exeter and an administration office in Truro. It is currently developing an additional office in Barnstaple.
2. ETS is a registered charity which is supervised by a board of trustees and a member council. A chief executive is responsible for the strategic direction and management of the provider. ETS contracts with Devon and Cornwall Learning and Skills Council (LSC) for apprenticeship frameworks. At the time of the inspection, ETS was training 230 publicly funded learners. Over the past three years the provider has received European Social Fund (ESF) funding for six projects in Devon and Cornwall for a total of 393 learners. In 2005-06 a further 90 learners completed privately funded training.
3. The provider employs 21 full-time staff and eight self-employed assessors who operate throughout Devon and Cornwall.

OVERALL EFFECTIVENESS

Grade 2

4. **The overall effectiveness of the provision is good.** The provision in business administration and law is good. Leadership and management are also good. Arrangements for equality of opportunity and quality improvement are satisfactory.
5. **The inspection team had some confidence in the reliability of the self-assessment process.** The self-assessment process is satisfactory. Staff throughout ETS contribute to the self-assessment, and the views of learners and employers are considered appropriately. The most recent self-assessment report, published in September 2006, matched the grades given by inspectors for the provision and overall leadership and management. The report was too descriptive, however, and claimed some aspects of normal practice as strengths. The associated quality improvement plan was particularly thorough and identified actions to overcome weaknesses, and to maintain strengths.
6. **The provider has demonstrated that it is in a good position to make improvements.** ETS has good strategic and operational management. Sound decisions have been made to adjust the provision to meet employers' and learners' needs. Staff are well managed and form an enthusiastic and supportive team. The provider maintains strong and productive external partnerships. Since the February 2003 inspection, the quality of the inspected provision has improved and is now good overall.

KEY CHALLENGES FOR EDUCATION AND TRAINING SKILLS:

- improve the planning and review of learning
- ensure that quality improvement arrangements cover all aspects of the provision
- improve the monitoring and promotion of equality of opportunity in the workplace
- continue to improve success rates, particularly for apprenticeships
- continue to develop access to training in more locations in the Southwest

GRADES

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

Grades awarded at inspection

Leadership and management		2
Contributory grades:		
Equality of opportunity		3
Quality improvement		3

Business administration and law			2
Contributory areas:	Number of learners	Contributory grade	
Administration Apprenticeships for young people	113	2	
Business management Other government-funded provision	44	2	
Customer service Apprenticeships for young people	51	2	

ABOUT THE INSPECTION

7. In planning the inspection it was noted that engineering, technology and manufacturing training had been withdrawn. Account was taken of the number of learners on current programmes, the previous inspection grades and the quality monitoring inspection report of March 2004. It was agreed during the inspection to inspect the single area of business administration and law. The inspection took place over four days in November 2006. This was the only inspection visit.

Number of inspectors	4
Number of inspection days	16
Number of learners interviewed	51
Number of staff interviewed	25
Number of employers interviewed	20
Number of locations/sites/learning centres visited	24
Number of partners/external agencies interviewed	4

Leadership and management

Strengths

- good strategic management
- good staff development
- strong and productive external partnerships
- good use of data to promote and monitor widening participation
- particularly welcoming and professional learning centres
- particularly good use of feedback from learners and employers

Weaknesses

- insufficient monitoring and reinforcement of equality of opportunity in the workplace
- incomplete quality improvement arrangements

Business administration and law

Strengths

- very high success rates in advanced apprenticeship and NVQ programmes
- good development of learners' personal and work-based skills
- good training workshops

Weaknesses

- insufficient planning and review of learning

WHAT LEARNERS LIKE ABOUT EDUCATION AND TRAINING SKILLS:

- 'the welcoming atmosphere. They make you feel at home'
- 'my assessor is brilliant and gives me lots of support'
- the workshops and their relevance to the workplace
- the computers and the range of software which are always available at the learning centres
- the e-NVQ

WHAT LEARNERS THINK EDUCATION AND TRAINING SKILLS COULD IMPROVE:

- the frequency and duration of visits to the workplace
- the amount of initial information about the workshop programmes
- session planning - 'to be able to work with people at the same level in my workshop group'
- punctuality - 'keep appointments with us on time'

DETAILED INSPECTION FINDINGS

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

Grade 2

Strengths

- good strategic management
- good staff development
- strong and productive external partnerships
- good use of data to promote and monitor widening participation
- particularly welcoming and professional learning centres
- particularly good use of feedback from learners and employers

Weaknesses

- insufficient monitoring and reinforcement of equality of opportunity in the workplace
- incomplete quality improvement arrangements

8. ETS has a clear strategic vision which is communicated effectively. The provider works well with employers and a wide range of partners to improve its provision, and to manage its training throughout the Southwest. In partnership with Exeter College, ETS gained CoVE status for its business and administration provision in 2006. Standards have improved since the February 2003 inspection. All of the provision inspected was good. Staff are well managed and work effectively as an enthusiastic team.

9. The senior management team and ETS's governing council provide good, strategic management. Collectively, the council members have an appropriate range of expertise and experience. They advise and support the chief executive and senior managers well. The rationale for changes to programmes offered in recent years, and the development of the current diversely funded business, is sound. ETS's three-year development plan for 2006-2009 is clear and well formulated. It includes broad main objectives, local priorities and the provider's values, and describes how it intends to achieve its main objectives, with improvement indicators for each objective. The plan is cross-referenced effectively to the annual business plans and the self-assessment report. The current business plan sets detailed quantitative targets for key tasks, main priorities and objectives. The business plan also includes detailed direction and action plans for each aspect of the business, as well as a very thorough risk management review. Strategic management of resources is good.

10. The provider's staff development is good. ETS is accredited as an investor in people. This is a national standard for improving an organisation's performance through its people. Staff have an annual appraisal, and a six-monthly review identifies their training and development needs. ETS supports its staff's continuous personal development well. Staff are given time off to attend external courses or in-house courses. All staff have either completed or are working towards a national vocational qualification (NVQ) in customer service at level 2 or 3 and key skills qualifications at level 3, in application of number and communications. This is in addition to any qualifications or training relevant to their

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particular job roles. Training plans, training logs and continuous personal development records are maintained satisfactorily for all staff. The company supports the development of freelance staff, and has a policy of internal promotion and development. A number of staff have changed career direction within the company following identification of their particular strengths and aspirations.

11. ETS has developed strong and productive external partnerships. Its partnership with Exeter College, in the business administration CoVE, provides access to a wide pool of expertise for the exchange of good practice. ETS is currently contributing to work for a sector skills council, by developing a new diploma qualification. The provider also exchanges good practice membership of a training provider network based in the Southwest. ETS is recognised for actively sharing its knowledge and expertise. The provider is accredited to offer initial advice and guidance to its learners, and to direct potential learners to the provision best suited to their needs through partnerships with other providers. ETS has also recently worked with a government standards unit to share its good practice, and to evaluate new learning packages on behalf of the unit.

12. Effective internal communications are maintained with staff and learners through a regular newsletter, staff meetings, telephone and e-mail communications, and regular visits. The general manager shares a large, open-plan office with all other Exeter-based staff. Satisfactory communications are maintained with staff outside the Exeter base through a recently installed wireless broadband system. Communications with employers are good. Employers are kept informed of their employees' progress, and the availability of other training, by regular contact with ETS's staff. The provider uses networking effectively with employers to monitor the changing training needs of local industries.

Equality of opportunity

Contributory grade 3

13. Data is used well to monitor and promote widening participation. ETS has made good use of its links with regional partners to gain and analyse market information. The data collected has been used to target potential learners. ETS carries out very detailed analyses of its recruitment trends and uses the information well to set clear targets for its marketing and delivery teams. Targets are monitored frequently and adjusted where necessary. Equal opportunities data analyses are considered at management and team meetings. ETS has a clear view of its targets and its progress in meeting them. The provider has increased the proportion of learners from minority ethnic backgrounds from 1.7 per cent in 2004-05, to 4.3 per cent in the current year, to date. This compares with the minority ethnic population average for Devon of less than 2 per cent, as recorded in the 2001 census. ETS has targeted an increase in male learners in business administration. In 2004-05 they achieved 12 per cent, and there has been a modest increase to 15 per cent for 2006.

14. Training centres provide a particularly welcoming and professional learning environment. Buildings are modern, well maintained and custom designed. There are training areas at ground-floor level, and appropriate toilet facilities for learners with limited mobility. Good access is provided to adaptive technology to support learners with disabilities such as dyslexia and impaired vision. ETS holds and manages this resource for the Devon learning partnership. Training rooms are furnished and equipped to a high standard. Learners appreciate the good access to information and communications technology facilities and to the refreshments which ETS provides. The provider has invested in wireless technology to enable assessors who work with remotely located

learners to use online assessment.

15. Learning is promoted satisfactorily. ETS is actively involved in promotional activities which are targeted at learners and employers. Since January 2006, the provider has attended 16 school and college careers events, together with promotional events for the Connexions service. ETS has an informative website which supports a range of suitable, paper-based literature which is available to learners and employers. The energetic marketing team maintains an extensive employer database. Learners and employers are often matched appropriately through the free recruitment service that ETS provides.

16. The provider has a suitable range of very detailed equal opportunities and work placement policies and procedures, as part of its quality monitoring arrangements. ETS meets its obligations to protect young people and vulnerable young adults under 'Every Child Matters' legislation. Learners take part in a range of activities which build confidence and promote their self-esteem. The learner induction pack contains an extensive helpline list which gives learners information about healthy and safe lifestyles. ETS has formed partnerships with external support agencies and the Connexions service. The management of learners' safety is satisfactory, and ETS conducts appropriate health and safety risk assessments for its own premises and those of employers. Learners consider that the provider offers a safe environment in which to learn. Satisfactory arrangements have been made to combat bullying and harassment and there is an adequate system for recording complaints and compliments. Recorded compliments well exceed complaints. Learners are provided with appropriate information at induction, and they appreciate the support from ETS's staff.

17. Support for learners' literacy and numeracy development needs is satisfactory. All learners receive a standard assessment and the results are recorded in individual learning plans. The support is, however, often informal and not always documented.

18. The provider does not carry out sufficient monitoring and reinforcement of equality of opportunity in the workplace. ETS works well to provide a safe and supportive environment at its training centres, but its arrangements to monitor equality of opportunity in the workplace are not systematic enough. Of the 35 questions posed in ETS's health and safety and equality of opportunity checklist for employers, only one question relates to equal opportunities. Inspectors found that not all employers had equal opportunities policies and arrangements, contrary to ETS's declared operating policy. The situation regarding equal opportunities in the workplace is not checked systematically at learners' progress reviews. Learners' understanding of equality of opportunity is not reinforced sufficiently. A standard question is used during the reviews, to test the learners' understanding of one aspect of equal opportunities, but learners gain little from the process. Some questions are particularly closed, such as, 'Does your company have an equal opportunities policy? Where can you find a copy?' In some cases, ETS's staff are unclear as to the answers expected. Some learners do not understand equality of opportunity sufficiently.

Quality improvement

Contributory grade 3

19. ETS demonstrates a clear commitment to quality improvement. It has invested significant amounts of time and resources in developing a quality improvement system which is based on a recognised national standard. The management and administration provision, which was judged to be good at the February 2003 inspection, has maintained

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its standards, and the customer services provision has improved from satisfactory to good. The employer training programme provision, which was introduced after the 2003 inspection is good. Success rates have improved significantly in the past year. ETS's quality improvement arrangements have not, however, identified all the weaknesses found by inspectors, and some established quality improvement measures have not improved the provision sufficiently.

20. ETS makes particularly good use of feedback. Learners evaluate all teaching and learning sessions. Staff collate and analyse the returns effectively, and individual learners are contacted to clarify any negative responses. Appropriate corrective action is then instigated. ETS encourages learners and employers to complete satisfaction surveys by offering store vouchers or other benefits. Analyses of returns show high levels of satisfaction in most areas. ETS draws up sound action plans to investigate the less successful aspects. The provider has a strong management information system. ETS produces useful analyses of feedback from all learners who have attended induction during the previous three years and uses the information to further improvements. One outcome has been the improvement of handouts. ETS's staff are enthusiastic about providing useful feedback through a variety of routes, including team meetings, to contribute further to continuous improvement. Staff have made 30 well-documented suggestions for improvements in the past year and many of these have been incorporated into quality improvement action plans.

21. The management of internal verification is satisfactory. The lead internal verifier plans and either carries out or monitors the process, giving appropriate feedback to assessors and verifiers. There are sufficient suitably qualified internal verifiers.

22. Staff involvement in the self-assessment process is satisfactory. Each department identifies strengths and weaknesses in its own area and produces associated good action plans. These are used in ETS's quality improvement plan and its annual self-assessment report. Employers' and learners' views are included appropriately. The most recent self-assessment report and development plan, published in September 2006, is critical, and there is a good correlation between self-assessed grades and those given by inspectors. However, much of the report is too descriptive and some of the key strengths claimed are normal practice. The associated development plan is particularly thorough and includes the maintenance of identified strengths, as well as measures to overcome identified weaknesses. A few areas of weakness which were identified at the previous inspection still exist.

23. ETS's quality improvement arrangements are incomplete. Quality improvement for those procedures included in the quality improvement and procedures manual are good, but not all procedures are included or covered in sufficient detail. For example, there is only a passing reference to the learners' review process, and the difference between progress reviews and other assessor visits is not defined clearly enough. Arrangements for the observation of teaching and learning do not focus sufficiently on learning. Each tutor is observed twice each year. Observers have received appropriate in-house training and use a report form which also acts as a guide to observations. The nature of the form, however, leads the observer to concentrate on the tutors' performance, rather than the level of learning or attainment. The grading system is not clear enough. Verbal feedback to tutors is good however, with constructive criticism and suggestions for improvement. Trainers receive a photocopy of the record sheet, but it does not allow sufficient space to

record feedback given or action plans for improvement. ETS's staff do not observe training conducted on employers' premises.

AREAS OF LEARNING

Business administration and law

Grade 2

Contributory areas:	Number of learners	Contributory grade
Administration Apprenticeships for young people	113	2
Business management Other government-funded provision	44	2
Customer service Apprenticeships for young people	51	2

24. ETS offers apprenticeships and advanced apprenticeships in business administration and customer service. Management training is offered at level 2, 3 and 4 under other government-funded training. A small number of employer training programme learners are currently completing programmes in administration and customer service.

25. Fifty-one learners are advanced apprentices in administration, and there are 62 apprentices programme. Forty-four learners are on management programmes funded through the ESF. Twenty-four learners are customer service apprentices and 27 are on advanced apprentices.

26. All learners have their suitability assessed by interview and a test of their literacy numeracy and language skills. Induction takes place in the workplace. Assessors visit learners in the workplace each month to provide training and assessment and to review their progress. ETS carries out training for all learners at its training centres in Exeter and Truro. A few management learners are completing their NVQs electronically.

27. Assessment and internal verification is carried out by directly employed staff and externally contracted staff. All learners are employed in a range of public and private sector companies.

Strengths

- very high success rates in advanced apprenticeship and NVQ programmes
- good development of learners' personal and work-based skills
- good training workshops

Weaknesses

- insufficient planning and review of learning

Achievement and standards

28. In the periods 2003-04 and 2004-05, success rates in apprenticeships and advanced apprenticeships were satisfactory, and at or above the national average. Success rates in advanced apprenticeships and NVQ-only programmes for 2005-06 are, however, very high. Based on provisional data provided by the LSC and ETS, the overall advanced apprenticeship success rate is 93 per cent, compared with a provisional national average

of approximately 55 per cent for the same period. All learners studying administration completed their full apprenticeship frameworks successfully. The employer training programme success rate at level 2 is very high, at 93 per cent. On the ESF programme 'Women in Control', almost 75 per cent of all leavers have achieved management qualifications. Those on the most recent programme are making good progress. Provisional success rates for the 2005-06 learners on apprenticeship programmes are satisfactory, at 58 per cent.

29. Learners develop good personal and work skills. They demonstrate increased confidence and motivation and employers recognise that learners have a more positive attitude towards their work. Those on management programmes demonstrate a significantly improved understanding of operational management, and the ability to apply it. Learners on all programmes show a notable increase in workplace skills. Skills learnt on the programme also benefit the employers. In one case a management learner had suggested, managed, and implemented change to comply with new recruitment legislation. Many learners are given extra responsibilities at work and others have been promoted while on their programmes. Many apprentices have progressed to advanced apprenticeships and some have gone on to management training. Some learners who have completed their programmes successfully are now supervising and mentoring new learners.

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	55	64	46	45	28
		timely	46	22	30	9	18
	2004-05	overall	53	62	47	45	31
		timely	52	42	35	31	23
Apprenticeships	2003-04	overall	96	78	51	56	37
		timely	70	34	25	19	18
	2004-05	overall	107	50	56	44	45
		timely	117	18	35	15	28
Adult training (long courses)	2004-05	overall	27	96		0	
		timely	27	56		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).

The quality of provision

30. ETS provides good training workshops. Learners are able to attend a wide range of relevant workshops which cover key skills, technical certificates and areas of operational management such as recruitment and selection. Learners also have access to training in other work-related topics such as assertiveness and team-building. Learners' interest in these sessions is generally good. Teaching staff are well qualified and experienced and use a range of good learning materials. Tutors plan and prepare well for workshops. Accommodation and teaching resources are particularly good, with high-speed internet access and interactive technology. Learners and employers value the effects of this

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training on workplace practices. However, training workshops are not available to a small number of geographically dispersed learners who are unable to attend ETS's training centres. ETS has, however, ensured that suitable individual training facilities are available. ETS has established well-equipped premises in Cornwall and has plans for more premises in North Devon.

31. Learners have an appropriate initial assessment at the beginning of their learning programmes which identifies those areas in which learners require additional support. Arrangements for supporting literacy and numeracy needs are satisfactory. Learners have a satisfactory induction which covers programme requirements and other relevant issues such as equality of opportunity and health and safety. Learners are placed on programmes that are appropriate to them and ETS works closely with them and often their employers to match the programme content to their job roles.

32. Appropriate assessments are carried out in the workplace during assessors' visits. Visits take place every four to five weeks and sometimes more frequently when required. An appropriate range of assessments methods is used. Assessors set timely, short-term objectives for assessment at their next visit. These objectives are clear and well understood by the learners. Learners and assessors develop good working relationships and learners feel well supported and encouraged. This situation is recognised by employers.

33. Learning is not planned and reviewed sufficiently. Initial assessment is not used sufficiently in drawing up the individual learning plan, and the detailed information acquired about additional learning support is not recorded. Target completion dates are set to coincide with the end of funding and do not take into account individual learners' previous qualifications or experience. The information that is recorded appropriately on the individual learning plan, which includes unit completion milestones, is not used effectively to plan and review learning during the programme. Progress reviews are not always scheduled effectively. Some learners and employers are not aware of scheduled dates and times. Employers are not routinely part of the review meeting and many just sign the paperwork. Action-planning during the review is only on a short-term basis. Most learners are not able to differentiate between assessment visits and progress review meetings. Reviews do not link all aspects of the learning programme sufficiently, such as the learners' work, and the training provided by employers. Some aspects of this weakness were identified at the 2003 inspection, and ETS has taken action to resolve them. ETS recognises that further development work is needed.

Leadership and management

34. Staff are kept well informed through regular monthly meetings and a weekly newsletter. They are encouraged to take up professional development opportunities and the assessor team is well qualified and occupationally experienced. Assessors' caseloads are appropriate for the number of visits to learners that they carry out. ETS sets overall success targets, but these are not devolved to individual members of the team.

35. Internal verification is satisfactory and meets awarding body standards. Internal verification planning is appropriate and sampling is appropriate. Many learners and employers are not, however, aware of the internal verification process. ETS's staff are fully involved in the self-assessment process and their views are taken into account. Equality of opportunity is covered adequately at induction and reinforced during the training

workshops. However, learners' understanding is sometimes superficial, and workplace visits are not used to develop their comprehension of the subject.

