

MONITORING VISIT: MAIN FINDINGS

Name of Provider: Inter Training Services Ltd
Date of visit: 2 October 2007

Context

Inter Training Services Limited (ITS Ltd) is a private limited company established in 1996. It has a contract with Surrey Learning and Skills Council (LSC) to provide work-based learning in hairdressing for apprentices and advanced apprentices. In addition, ITS Ltd offers privately-funded training to a small number of adult learners following national vocational qualifications (NVQs) at levels 2 and 3 in hairdressing, and for learners completing assessor awards. Most learners are based in salons in Surrey, Berkshire and Hampshire.

This monitoring visit follows the inspection of ITS Ltd that took place in June 2006 at which leadership and management and equality of opportunity were judged to be good. The arrangements for quality improvement were satisfactory and training for hairdressing apprentices was satisfactory.

Achievement and standards

What actions have been taken to address issues around retention and achievements from the previous inspection and how effective have these been?	Reasonable progress
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ITS Ltd has made reasonable progress in achievements and standards. At the previous inspection some learners were making slow progress. The overall success rates for apprentices have steadily improved over the last three years from 31% in 2004-05, to 52% in 2005-06 and 71% in 2006-07. Timely success rates are showing some improvement. Success rates for apprentices have improved from 15% in 2005-06 to 52% in 2006-07. Learners are set clear and more informed targets and improvements have been made to the monitoring of their progress.

Trainers/assessors are now more aware of the progress made by learners. There is a clear focus on ensuring key skills are completed early in the programme. However, success rates for the small number of advanced apprentices have declined over the last two years and none of the three learners who started in 2005-06 achieved their qualification. Since the previous inspection improvements have been made to the management information system and reports are now more informative.

The quality of provision

What progress is being made in improving the effectiveness of progress reviews?	Reasonable progress
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ITS Ltd has made reasonable progress in improving the effectiveness of progress reviews. However, timely success rates do not yet show the impact of these improvements. New review forms have been introduced which are clear and easier for learners and employers to understand. Staff have improved their skills in questioning learners and setting and recording clear short-term targets. All staff have attended a one day workshop to improve the review process. Reviews focus more clearly on progress and achievements. Useful questionnaires are now used to increase employer engagement during the review process.

What improvements have been made to induction and initial assessment?	Insufficient progress
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ITS Ltd has made insufficient progress in improving induction and initial assessment. Induction was judged to be satisfactory at the previous inspection. Few improvements have been made to the process but it remains satisfactory overall. Staff ask learners to complete satisfaction questionnaires on a routine basis. These were analysed in detail in 2006. However, staff do not compare the results of the survey with previous years to clearly identify trends in levels of satisfaction. ITS Ltd has recently introduced an induction checklist for employers to use with new learners. It has also introduced a new initial assessment process. It is too early to judge the impact of these new initiatives. Initial assessment is used to identify learners who need additional support. Individual learning plans record the scores from initial assessment although they do not specify the type of support that a learner should receive. Staff do not share information about learners' identified additional learning needs.

Leadership and management

What actions have been taken to improve employer involvement and engagement in the learning process and how effective have these been?	Reasonable progress
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ITS Ltd has made reasonable progress in engaging employers since the previous inspection. A wide range of information, advice and guidance is available to employers to encourage involvement in the learning process. Initial meetings with employers are well structured with a clear focus on health and safety and risk assessment. Trainers and assessors visit salons every three weeks to provide training and assessment. ITS Ltd has established good working relationships with a large number of salons. The co-ordination of theory training and practical training is well planned. ITS Ltd produce an informative regular newsletter for employers. In August

2006, ITS Ltd introduced a partner salon membership scheme with a clear set of criteria to identify salons that are less co-operative in the learning process. Insufficient information is available to identify salons that have improved and how the better salons are sharing best practice. Approximately one third of salons have their own work-based assessors. Few of these assessors attend assessor meetings. Attendance is not sufficiently well managed or monitored at standardisation meetings. This weakness was identified at the previous inspection. The best attendance rate was in November 2006 when 75% of all active assessors attended. Assessors who attend the meetings make good use of them to discuss best practice and share concerns.

How adequate and effective are the self-assessment report and post-inspection action plan?	Reasonable progress
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ITS Ltd has made reasonable progress on the self-assessment report since the previous inspection. It has continued to demonstrate a comprehensive and inclusive approach to the self-assessment process. The self-assessment report is sufficiently evaluative and clearly identifies strengths and areas for improvement. However, the proposed key challenges focus on business processes and do not provide sufficient focus on learners. Since the previous inspection improvements to the achievement of apprenticeship frameworks are identified clearly as part of the self-assessment process. The post-inspection development plan and quality improvement plan are detailed and identify clearly where improvements have been made and where further action is necessary.