

# ITS Training Services

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316748

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## Background information

### Inspection judgements

Inspectors use a four-point scale to summarise their judgements about achievement and standards, the quality of provision, and leadership and management, which includes a grade for equality of opportunity.

#### Key for inspection grades

Grade 1	Outstanding
Grade 2	Good
Grade 3	Satisfactory
Grade 4	Inadequate

Further information can be found on how inspection judgements are made on [www.ofsted.gov.uk](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk).

### Scope of the inspection

In deciding the scope of the inspection, inspectors take account of the provider's most recent self-assessment report and development plans, and comments from the local Learning and Skills Council (LSC) or other funding body. Where appropriate, inspectors also consider the previous inspection report ([www.ofsted.gov.uk](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk)), reports from the inspectorates' quality monitoring or annual assessment visits, and data on learners and their achievements over the period since the previous inspection.

In addition to reporting on overall effectiveness of the organisation, its capacity to improve further, achievement and standards, quality of provision and leadership and management, this inspection focused on specialist provision in:

- Retail and commercial enterprise

## Description of the provider

1. ITS Training Services (ITS) is a private company, specialising in the provision of training, consultancy and qualifications to import/export industry sectors. Since 1999, it has provided work-based learning for young people. ITS delivers apprenticeship programmes in retailing, business administration and sports and recreation.
2. ITS also provides professional qualifications on behalf of the Institute of Exports and also for the Chartered Institute of Transport and logistics. Government funded training programmes account for around 25% of the total provision.
3. ITS has its main training and administrative office in Felixstowe. A new office was opened in Liverpool in March 2007. Two partners own the company and they both have an active role in the training and management of ITS. One of the partners is responsible for the finance and management of the organisation and he is also the centre co-ordinator. The other partner is responsible for sales and business development. They are supported by a senior management team led by the director of operations. A team of six qualified assessors and an administrative team further support the provision.
4. Learners are based with employers in Merseyside, Essex, London, Bradford and Birmingham. ITS funds its training provision through Suffolk and Merseyside LSC. ITS does not use subcontractors for the delivery of any aspect of its training programmes.
5. ITS has 19 advanced apprentices and 33 apprentices undertaking a logistics qualification. There were too few learners in the business administration and management and sports and recreation sectors for these areas to be inspected.
6. ITS was awarded Center of Vocational Excellence Pathfinder status in international trade and logistics in September 2002.

## Summary of grades awarded

Effectiveness of provision	Good: Grade 2
Capacity to improve	Good: Grade 2
Achievement and standards	Good: Grade 2
Quality of provision	Good: Grade 2
Leadership and management	Good: Grade 2
Equality of opportunity	Contributory grade: Outstanding: Grade 1

## Sector subject area

Retail and commercial enterprise	Good: Grade 2
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## Overall judgement

### Effectiveness of provision

#### Good: Grade 2

7. The overall effectiveness of the provision is good. Achievement and standards and the quality of provision are good. Leadership and management are good and equality of opportunity is outstanding.

### Capacity to improve

#### Good: Grade 2

8. ITS has demonstrated that it has a good capacity to improve. It has effectively addressed the weaknesses identified at the previous inspection. Success rates have increased and many of the strengths identified during the previous inspection have also been maintained or further developed. ITS has continued to develop its approach to the promotion of equal opportunities in an outstanding manner.
9. The self-assessment process is good. The self-assessment report focuses clearly on the learner experience. The development plan accurately specifies the necessary actions to continue improving the provision with clear timescales. Inspectors agreed with most of the judgements and findings of the report.

## Key strengths

- Excellent success rates for apprentices
- Good achievement of additional qualifications
- Very effective use of good quality learning resources to promote learning
- Good strategy to meet learner and employer needs
- Particularly effective networking partnerships
- Good actions to rectify weaknesses identified at the previous inspection
- Outstanding promotion of equal opportunities through the learning experience

## Key areas for improvement

- Insufficient co-ordination of employer training and off-the-job training

## Main findings

### Achievement and standards

#### Good: Grade 2

10. Achievement and standards are good. In July 2005, the main qualification delivered by ITS became no longer available to any new learners. ITS worked closely with the industry sector and employers to identify the best possible replacement for the qualification. This was achieved by providing the Commercial and Shipping Training qualification (COAST). However, the advanced apprentices did not have access to a current and valid technical certificate for their programme until the sector launched the new certificate in December 2007.
11. The success rate for apprentices undertaking a logistics qualification is excellent. The success rate for these learners in 2006/07 was 90%. In the current year, success rates are 97%. The rate of progress for these learners was slow in 2006/07 due to reasons beyond the provider's control in relation to the discontinuation of the previous qualification and the transition into a suitable alternative qualification. Current learners are making very good progress towards the new qualification aims.
12. There is good achievement of an additional industry-related qualification. All learners have access to achieving the COAST qualification. For those who take this qualification, the success rate in 2006/07 was 77%. The remaining learners working through the previous qualification have also experienced an increase on success rates from 67% in 2005/06 to 74% in 2006/07. The few current learners continue to make good progress towards completing their qualification. Key skill achievement rates are very good. The first time pass rate of key skills in 2006/07 was 85% and a substantial amount of learners achieve a higher key skill level than that required for the completion of their framework.
13. ITS encourages learners to progress from Level 2 to Level 3 qualifications and most learners who start their training at Level 2 progress onto higher level programmes. Throughout their programme, learners greatly increase their confidence and develop good industry skills that allow them to improve their working practices.
14. The advanced apprenticeships experienced slow progress with their qualification in 2006/07. ITS began delivering the logistics programme in September 2005 as a replacement for the previous qualification and most learners are still on programme and they are now making satisfactory progress towards completing their qualification.

### Quality of provision

#### Good: Grade 2

15. The quality of provision is good. A high standard of learning resources are used very effectively by ITS to support learning. Learners regularly use an on-line computer based community forum that provides them with good quality information. Assignments are well designed and used well to support progression.
16. A Virtual Learning Environment has been developed for use by ITS staff and learners. Users can access a vast range of support materials as well as their personal records of progress and achievement. CDs and DVDs produced by ITS contain highly informative qualification related information. Paper-based materials are prepared sensitively to help

meet different learning styles and they are particularly effective in supporting the development of key skills. Lessons are stimulating and assignments focus on relevant industry topics. Tutors make very good use of laptop computers and videos during the lessons. Teaching sessions include a good range of teaching methods, including the use of formal individual instruction and detailed whole group exercises. This strength was recognised in the provider's self-assessment report.

17. ITS has well qualified and specialist staff who, along with the employers, provide learners with particularly effective personal coaching to support motivation and learning.
18. Initial assessment arrangements are satisfactory and the needs of learners are adequately met. Learners identified as having additional learning support needs at initial assessment have their needs individually planned and support programmes are devised to meet their specific needs. However, learners have their individual learning styles assessed at a later stage in the programme. Two members of staff are appropriately qualified to identify dyslexia. Adaptive technology is available to learners with additional learning needs when they attend the training centre.
19. Assessment of learner's work is satisfactory. Tutors examine the individual learner's results in detail and praise good work. They handle errors in learner's work with care and sensitivity and provide very helpful encouragement. All learners maintain electronic portfolios containing a wide range of evidence. However, learners do not always receive immediate feedback indicating how their evidence meets the qualification criteria.
20. Learner progress reviews adequately focus on the agreed learning plan and the progress being made. Reviews are used effectively to set the appropriate targets for learning and progress.
21. Programmes are very good at meeting the requirements of learners and employers. Employers and learners particularly value the additional recognised COAST qualification.
22. Employers provide good support for learners. They deliver effective on-the-job instruction, well designed computer based learning and provide them with good quality courses conducted either in-house or externally. ITS notes any previous learning when recruiting learners. However, there is insufficient co-ordination of the employer training and the off-the-job training. When planning training and assessment, ITS takes insufficient account of the training given by the employer. The employer based training is not routinely included in the learner progress reviews. Some learners and employers have insufficient knowledge of framework and qualification requirements. This area for improvement was not fully identified in the self-assessment report. Learners benefit from an emergency telephone helpline available outside working hours. Information advice and guidance is satisfactory and is particularly good in the early stages of the learner programme.

## **Leadership and management**

**Good: Grade 2**

### **Equality of opportunity**

Contributory grade: Outstanding: Grade 1

23. Leadership and management are good. ITS has good strategies to meet the needs of learners and employers. ITS has worked hard to overcome the problems experienced with



the termination of the previous qualification in 2005. Through very productive liaison work with employers, ITS now fully understands the particular requirements of their business and sought a replacement qualification that now suits both learner and employer. ITS has collaborated well with the awarding bodies and industry sector skills council to create the new qualifications which are due to be launched soon. The provider has also made a substantial investment in information technology to support a flexible approach to how learners can access learning materials that fit around their professional and personal schedules.

24. ITS has developed particularly effective networking partnerships with both key stakeholders in the shipping industry and academic bodies. Learners benefit from these links. For example, last year half of the learners took part in an international work placement exchange where they had the opportunity to enhance their training by working in other shipping companies. The provider has also developed links with Northampton University by agreeing learner exemptions due to their prior attainment at ITS which means they can obtain a higher education degree in a shorter time.
25. There are effective internal and external communications. Meetings are regular and frequent and involve both staff and management. Key issues such as learner performance, the self-assessment process and equality of opportunity are adequately discussed. Newsletters are also used effectively to update learners and employers on any news relevant to the learning programme.
26. Staff appraisal and development are very comprehensive. Staff assess themselves against the achievement of the business objectives and their job role. Personal and organisational development needs are effectively identified during the appraisal and, often, features such as coaching, mentoring and shadowing are built into the organisation's overall training plan.
27. The provider has comprehensive management information systems. Accurate data is collected centrally and updated in a timely manner. Reports containing analysed information are regularly discussed by management and staff teams during meetings. However, there is sometimes insufficient detailed analysis of data particularly around the identification of learner performance trends across all geographical areas.
28. ITS has resolved the weaknesses identified at the previous inspection. For example: initial assessment has been improved by establishing a new information system that more effectively details about learners' skill level and individual learning needs. Key skills learning materials are now relevant to learners' needs and are a fully integrated feature of programme.
29. ITS has a range of new yet fully established quality policies and procedures covering all aspects of the learning programmes. The extensive framework of quality improvement initiatives are closely monitored by the quality committee. Learner and employer feedback systems are being reviewed to ensure information is obtained in a more frequent manner throughout the programme. Analysis of learner feedback has been useful in informing improvements. Internal auditing is now part of the quality improvement system and it is used well to identify issues of non-compliance. Arrangements for the observations of teaching and learning are satisfactory and they contribute towards the appraisal of staff. ITS appreciates that it needs to further analyse the outcomes of its quality improvements arrangements to better monitor the impact of these arrangements over time.

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30. The procedures to secure adequate welfare and safeguarding arrangements for adults meet current government requirements.
31. Arrangements for the promotion and development of equality of opportunity throughout the learning experience are outstanding. In particular, ITS has carefully planned a strategy to develop learner, employer and the industry sector's understanding of equality and diversity matters. The promotion of equal opportunity and diversity is an integral part of the organisation's strategic business plan. The plan contains effective targeted actions linked to the regional equality and diversity impact measures. The operations director takes strategic and operational responsibility for the successful delivery of equality of opportunity training and updating to staff, learners and employers. The provider has developed a very extensive policy on equality of opportunity reflecting the most up-to-date relevant legislation.
32. Learners receive very comprehensive information on equal opportunities at several stages of the learning programme. At induction, they are provided with dedicated learning sessions that focus specifically on equal opportunities and diversity within their industry sector. At the end of these sessions, learners undertake a series of activities to appropriately test their level of understanding. Learners receive prompt feedback on the outcome and this work is then recorded onto their e-portfolio. ITS carefully monitors learners' increased knowledge and awareness of equality of opportunity.
33. Equal opportunity and diversity are reinforced very effectively at each visit by the assessor and during progress reviews. They use a set of ITS designed equality themes to establish and monitor the level of understanding the learner has on the subject.
34. The provider fully monitors its recruitment targets from under-represented groups and develops action plans that target local employers via newsletters to raise awareness of the benefits of employing a diverse work force. ITS has consistently met all its gender participation recruitment targets. The provider focuses very effectively on monitoring the performance of different groups of learners. Data is analysed and ITS has implemented the appropriate strategies to ensure all learners make good progress with their qualification. Different gender and minority ethnic groups of learners achieve equally well.
35. The monitoring of equality of opportunity in the workplace is particularly good. ITS has taken an active role in ensuring all employers have the appropriate equality of opportunity policy. The provider offers extensive up-to-date information to learners and employers on equality issues via newsletters and employer events at the training centre. A local solicitor who specialises on employment law is a guest 'author' and provides content to the newsletters. All policies regarding equality of opportunity are available for employers and learners on the provider's information portal in a comprehensive variety of languages to meet the needs of the local workforce.
36. ITS takes an active role in influencing the approaches to widening participation for under-represented groups within the international trade and shipping industry and the local community. For example, a series of informal communication events were used to raise awareness of the local traveller community's needs within training and education. The strength highlighted in this section was identified in the self-assessment report.
37. Staff receive frequent communication on equality and diversity issues such as legislation changes or issues affecting learners. They also have good access to regular development on equality matters through formal training sessions.

38. The self-assessment process is fully inclusive of staff and gathers learners' views appropriately. The process is regular in identifying strengths and areas for improvement in the provision. It makes good use of data to highlight achievement and standards. The report is evaluative and it highlights strengths and areas for improvement that have a direct impact on the learning experience. Inspectors agreed with all strengths identified in the report although they found a further area for improvement.

## What learners like:

- 'Would definitely recommend ITS'
- 'Like learning and putting into practice, much easier to link things now at work'
- 'Good introduction, I have gained a broader understanding'
- 'The lectures really gave me the understanding of the industry'
- 'ITS staff are very friendly and helpful'
- 'The quality of materials'

## What learners think could improve:

- 'More support visits'
- 'Opportunity for management apprentices to network'

## Learners' achievements

## Success rates on **work-based learning** retail and commercial enterprise **apprenticeship** programmes managed by ITS 2004/05 to 2006/07

Programme	End Year	Success rate	No. of learners*	Provider NVQ rate**	National NVQ rate**	Provider framework rate**	National framework rate**
Advanced Apprenticeships	06-07	overall	1	0%	50%	0%	44%
		timely	4	0%	34%	0%	30%
Apprenticeships	04-05	overall	1	0%	46%	0%	36%
		timely	1	0%	30%	0%	23%
	05-06	overall	1	100%	54%	100%	49%
		timely	2	0%	38%	0%	34%
	06-07	overall	21	90%	59%	90%	56%
		timely	22	14%	44%	14%	41%

\* Learners who leave later than originally planned are counted in the year they actually leave. This group of learners are then added to the learners who planned to complete in a given year and did so or left earlier than planned

\*\* Provider and national qualification success rates are calculated using LSC published data derived from the Individual Learning Record

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