System Group

Inspection date 12 October 2007

Inspection number 316802

Contents

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.

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), 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:

- Transportation operations and maintenance
- Information and communication technology
- Accounting and finance

The inspection did not include System Group's provision in skills for life, retail and customer services, cleaning and support services, or warehousing and distribution.

Description of the provider

1. System Group Ltd is a private limited company based at Carlisle Airport Business Park, near Carlisle, Cumbria. It was established in 1986 and incorporated as a limited company in 1999. The organisation comprises three companies: System Group, System Information Technology, and System Recruitment. The group director of operations has overall responsibility for work-based learning, assisted by a work-based learning manager, a quality manager and a range of trainers, assessors and support staff. System Recruitment and System IT have their own boards of directors. They, in turn, along with the director of operations, report to the group chief executive officer and group board.

2. The airport site houses System Group's corporate headquarters and support staff for all business units. This site also includes the information technology (IT) business unit. System Group has a training centre in central Carlisle which accommodates contract cleaning, recruitment, accountancy training and a **learndirect** centre. They also have a centre in Maryport which delivers motor vehicle provision and lift-truck driver training. The organisation rents training facilities from Middlesbrough College, at their Longlands campus, and has a driver training centre at Alloa in Scotland. Twelve tutor-assessors and a basic skills tutor are involved in delivering the work-based learning programmes.

3. The core training activity is transport logistics, and the bulk of LSC funded training is in driving goods vehicles, lift-truck driving, and IT. The IT training has been introduced since System Group's previous inspection and is expanding. The majority of System Group's work-based learning programmes are funded by Cumbria LSC. At the time of the inspection there were over 250 learners in work-based learning programmes and apprenticeships, and just over 650 Train to Gain learners.

4. On its direct contract with the LSC, System Group currently delivers apprenticeships and advanced apprenticeships in motor vehicle servicing and repair, driving goods vehicles, accountancy and warehousing and distribution. It also subcontracts apprenticeships from Gen II, Carter and Carter and Furness College. System Group also has a significant number of adults on Train to Gain and **learndirect** programmes. A proportion of this work is subcontracted from other providers, delivered as part of a consortium, or funded by LSCs in other regions. Approximately 50% of the provider's financial turnover comes from its LSC funded work.

Summary of grades awarded

Effectiveness of provision	**Good: Grade 2**
Work-based learning	**Contributory grade: Good: Grade 2**
Train to Gain	**Contributory grade: Good: Grade 2**
learndirect	**Contributory grade: Good: Grade 2**
Capacity to improve	**Good: Grade 2**

Achievement and standards	Good: Grade 2
Work-based learning	Contributory grade: Good: Grade 2
Train to Gain	Contributory grade: Outstanding: Grade 1
learndirect	Contributory grade: Satisfactory: Grade 3

Quality of provision	Satisfactory: Grade 3
Work-based learning	Contributory grade: Satisfactory: Grade 3
Train to Gain	Contributory grade: Good: Grade 2
learndirect	Contributory grade: Satisfactory: Grade 3

Leadership and management	Good: Grade 2
Work-based learning	Contributory grade: Good: Grade 2
Train to Gain	Contributory grade: Good: Grade 2
learndirect	Contributory grade: Satisfactory: Grade 3
Equality of opportunity	Contributory grade: Satisfactory: Grade 3

Sector subject area

Transportation operations and maintenance	Good: Grade 2

Information and communication technology	Satisfactory: Grade 3

Accounting and finance	Good: Grade 2

Overall judgement

Effectiveness of provision

Good: Grade 2

Work-based learning	Contributory grade: Good: Grade 2
Train to Gain	Contributory grade: Good: Grade 2
learndirect	Contributory grade: Good: Grade 2

5.   The overall effectiveness of the provision is good. Achievements and standards are good. The quality of provision is satisfactory. Leadership and management are good.

Equality of opportunity is satisfactory. Provision in transportation operations and maintenance, and accountancy and finance are good. Provision in information and communication technology (ICT) is satisfactory

Capacity to improve

Good: Grade 2

6. System Group demonstrates good capacity to improve. Since the previous inspection, most of the strengths identified have been maintained and all key weaknesses have been rectified. Inspection grades have been maintained or improved. Equality of opportunity, a weakness at the previous inspection, is now satisfactory. Learners' success rates on most established programmes are good or better. The range of provision has been increased to meet local and national needs. The provider has a strong commitment to quality improvement. Overall, the steps taken to maintain and improve the quality of provision since the previous inspection in 2004 have been good.

7. The self-assessment process is satisfactory. The grades identified by the provider in its most recent self-assessment report closely matched those awarded by the inspection team. Members of staff are fully involved in the self-assessment process but use of learner and employer feedback is under-developed. The report did not clearly cover all aspects of the *Common Inspection Framework*, or provide overall evaluations of achievements and standards, or the quality of provision. The development plan includes specific actions, aimed to bring about improvements.

Key strengths

- Good strategic management
- Very effective partnerships which benefit learners, employers and the local community
- Good staff appraisal and development
- Strong commitment to quality improvement
- Good overall success rates in transportation operations and maintenance
- Good achievement of additional qualifications in transportation operations
- Good development of skills
- Good overall success rates in accountancy apprenticeships
- Good progression to higher levels in accountancy
- Particularly effective support for learners

Key areas for improvement

- Lack of clarity in the management of some aspects of shared provision
- Under-developed lesson observation system
- Declining success rates on motor vehicle apprenticeships
- Under-developed arrangements for motor vehicle off-the-job training
- Incomplete arrangements for the identification and provision of additional learning support in accountancy

Main findings

Achievement and standards

Good: Grade 2

Work-based learning	Contributory grade: Good: Grade 2
Train to Gain	Contributory grade: Outstanding: Grade 1
learndirect	Contributory grade: Satisfactory: Grade 3

8.   Achievements and standards are good. Success rates on Train to Gain programmes in driving goods vehicles are very good. Learners on ICT programmes make good progress, but this provision has only recently been introduced, and it is too early to judge learner achievements. In accountancy, overall success rates for apprentices are good, and a high proportion of learners progress to higher levels of training. All System Group learners develop good vocational skills and many, particularly in transportation operations, achieve additional qualifications which are vocationally relevant.

Quality of provision

Satisfactory: Grade 3

Work-based learning   Contributory grade: Satisfactory: Grade 3
Train to Gain   Contributory grade: Good: Grade 2
learndirect   Contributory grade: Satisfactory: Grade 3

9.   The quality of provision is satisfactory. Teaching and learning are satisfactory overall. System Group has made significant investment in accommodation at its Carlisle Airport site for motor vehicle off-the-job training. However, level 3 learners spend insufficient time at the centre, and specialist resources for heavy goods vehicles are inadequate. In ICT and accountancy, teachers are well qualified and experienced, but the monitoring of the quality of teaching and learning is under-developed.

10.   Arrangements for identifying and providing courses that meet the needs of learners and employers are good. All departments within System Group work closely with a wide range of external partners, particularly employers. System Group offers a good range of training programmes, with flexible modes of delivery. Guidance and support for learners are good. Support for learners in transportation operations and maintenance is particularly effective. In accountancy, the arrangements for identification and provision of additional learning support are incomplete. Provision for learners who need help with literacy, numeracy, or English as a second language (ESOL) are satisfactory.

Leadership and management

Good: Grade 2

Work-based learning   Contributory grade: Good: Grade 2
Train to Gain   Contributory grade: Good: Grade 2
learndirect   Contributory grade: Satisfactory: Grade 3
Equality of opportunity   Contributory grade: Satisfactory: Grade 3

11.   Strategic management is good. Strategic and business plans clearly define the vision, aims and objectives of the organisation, which are closely linked to local and national priorities. Staff contribution to business planning is good. Progress towards achieving the business plan is frequently and closely monitored. As highlighted in the self-assessment report, there has been significant investment in buildings and facilities over the last two years, which has contributed to providing a good quality learning environment. The expertise within the wider commercial divisions of System Group is used to the benefit of all learners.

12.   As identified in its self-assessment report, System Group has a wide range of partnerships which are particularly effective, and benefit learners, employers and the community. A number of subcontracting arrangements are well used to provide apprenticeship and Train to Gain provision across a wide geographical area. **learndirect** centres are being used to help increase participation in rural and deprived areas. System Group is working very closely with a large number of national and local employers. Customisation of training programmes is good. Assessment arrangements are flexible and meet the specific needs of learners and employers. Vocational programmes for pupils from five Cumbrian schools include the foundation stage Association of Accounting Technicians qualification (AAT) delivered at two school sixth forms.

13. Staff appraisal and development is good. It is strongly focused on meeting the stated business objectives, together with personal development needs. Performance targets are challenging, specific, and have clear and measurable outcomes. Staff training and development is well managed and departmental progress towards meeting the plan is frequently monitored. Managers are being developed through completing a set of core management competences.

14. System Group's commitment to quality improvement is good. Key management procedures and learning processes are audited and reviewed annually. Policies and procedures are up to date and cover all aspects of the training process. Learner and employer feedback is routinely collected by questionnaire, and feedback leads to quality improvement. However, response rates from employers are low, and it is recognised that this needs to improve. Staff are set challenging targets for recruitment, retention and overall and timely success rates. Performance data for recruitment and success is monitored and reported on monthly. While being consistently and, on most programmes, significantly above national averages, timely success rates remain well below System Group's overall success rates. Managers have recognised the late identification of learners at risk as contributing to this. The reporting and identification of appropriate actions relating to learners at risk has recently improved.

15. Since the previous inspection, equality of opportunity has improved and is now satisfactory. System Group has implemented a range of initiatives to widen participation. Policies and procedures are appropriate and up to date. Equality and diversity is a standard agenda item on team meetings. There is a nominated officer for child protection and a champion for *Every Child Matters*. All staff have been criminal records bureau checked. Although *Every Child Matters* is not included in the self-assessment report, System Group has produced a relevant development plan. Learners receive satisfactory equality and diversity training during induction, but reinforcement during progress reviews is, in some instances, weak. Members of staff are required to attend a one day training course in equality and diversity, although this has not yet been completed by all staff. Resources are available to support learners' needs and adaptations made where necessary. Analysis of the relative performance of different groups of learners is insufficient to inform management decisions.

16. The use of observation of teaching and learning, in quality improvement, is under-developed. This was recognised in the self-assessment report, and a revised system is being implemented. Observation of teaching and learning is established, but there is insufficient focus on the key aspects of teaching and learning. The grades awarded through the system are too optimistic. Analysis of the grades by different programme areas is not carried out. However, there are some good examples of the present system leading to improvements in teaching and training for individual members of staff.

17. There is a lack of clarity in the management of some aspects of shared provision. The respective roles and responsibilities are not always clear. On one subcontracted course, from Kendal College, it is unclear who has responsibility to provide initial assessment of new learners, or if it has taken place. For subcontracted apprentices from Carter and Carter, where System Group's role is the delivery of key skills and the technical certificate, employers do not have contact details for System Group or its staff. In some school provision, it is unclear who provides the support for learners identified as

needing additional learning support. School programmes are managed from within departments, and although the programme is quite new, no senior manager has the overall responsibility for managing the school based 14-19 provision.

What learners like:

- 'The accountancy teachers are really good, and very patient and supportive'
- 'The books you get in accountancy'
- 'It's nice to be somewhere different from school'
- 'They've helped me understand what we actually do at work'
- 'I am happy with everything they do'
- The regular visits to motor vehicle workplaces
- 'I get good help from the motor vehicle assessors if I'm stuck'
- 'I enjoy collecting the evidence for my portfolio'
- 'System shows me how to do jobs I don't get to do at work'
- 'They come out to work at any time to do an assessment'
- The good support from all System Group assessors
- 'My Train to Gain course is very practical and we get good updates on health and safety'
- 'Train to Gain got me a certificate and I didn't even have to go to college'
- 'I learnt more about IT in one year at System Group than I did in two years at [another training provider]'
- 'The IT tutors are very knowledgeable and know their subject'
- 'I feel well supported on my IT course, I can call or email them any time'

What learners think could improve:

- More time and support for portfolio-building in accountancy
- 'Accountancy lessons can be rather boring'
- 'There's not enough motor vehicle practical work when we do our day-release'
- 'My evening class is too short, and it's a long way to go'
- The ventilation in one of the motor vehicle classrooms
- The facilities for break and lunchtimes
- 'There's too much paperwork on my Train to Gain course'
- 'Some of the worksheets we get on our Train to Gain course are a bit dry'
- The sequence of units on IT **learndirect** courses could be better planned

Sector subject areas

Transportation operations and maintenance

Good: Grade 2

Context

18. System Group has nearly 600 learners following programmes in transportation operations, and motor vehicle servicing and repair. Of these, 21 are apprentices, seven are advanced apprentices and 398 Train to Gain learners follow programmes in driving goods vehicles. Another 110 Train to Gain learners are training on lift-trucks. In motor vehicle, there are 28 apprentices, and 32 advanced apprentices. All learners are employed. Employers include large companies, motor vehicle franchises, small garages, transport companies and a range of general engineering companies. Assessment and progress reviews are completed in the workplace by five full-time staff, with some assistance from in-company assessors. The quality of assessment is monitored by three internal verifiers. Groups of 14-16 year olds from three local schools are completing vocational qualifications in motor vehicle with System Group.

Strengths

- Very good overall success rates on Train to Gain programmes
- Good overall success rates on work-based learning in transportation
- Good achievement of additional qualifications
- Particularly effective support for learners
- Good working relationships with employers, which benefit learners

Areas for improvement

- Declining success rates in motor vehicle apprenticeships
- Under-developed arrangements for motor vehicle off-the-job training

Achievement and standards

19. Overall success rates on Train to Gain programmes in driving goods vehicles are very good. In 2006-07, 97% of learners were successful, and so far in 2007-08 this has risen to 100%. Success rates on Train to Gain programmes in lift-truck operation are also good. In 2006-07 the overall success rate for lift-truck training was 80%, and so far in 2007-08 it is 92%.

20.   Overall success rates for advanced apprenticeships in driving goods vehicles are good and significantly above the national average. Apprentices' overall success rates in driving goods vehicles are good and improving, rising from 61% to 83% over the three years up to 2006-07.

21.   Achievement of additional qualifications is good. Learners have the opportunity to gain a range of additional qualifications dependent upon personal training plans. For example, many learners in transportation complete car driving lessons, and gain goods vehicle licences and dangerous goods qualifications.

22.   Success rates on motor vehicle apprenticeships are declining. Over the three years up to 2006-07, overall success rates fell from 88% to 63%. However, the most recent figures are still in line with national averages. The provider has recently reduced the number of learners on programme-led apprenticeships. Data available at the time of inspection indicates that success rates are likely to improve in the current year. Overall success rates on advanced apprenticeships are similar to apprenticeships, but numbers have been much lower on this programme and there is no established trend. Timely success rates, across all motor vehicle programmes, are well above national averages.

Quality of provision

23.   As identified in the self-assessment report, support for learners is particularly effective. Learners are given time off to complete work for their qualification. The programmes offered meet the needs of the learners. Apprentices attend off-the-job training during working hours. Apprentices are provided with assessors' mobile telephone numbers. Assessors carry out workplace visits during unsocial hours where necessary. Assessors, who work with apprentices and Train to Gain learners, use their occupational and professional skills well to guide and support learners. In many workplaces apprentices are allocated experienced mentors to work with.

24.   Relationships with employers are good, and they benefit learners. Employers have a strong commitment to training. The programmes offered by System Group meet the needs of employers. Employers are supportive and provide good training and assessment opportunities. Some of the larger employers have trained their own assessors and they are playing a significant part in assessing and supporting learners. Good and effective communication links exist between employers and their System Group assessors.

25.   The vocational training delivered to 14-16 year olds from local schools is tailored to the abilities and aspirations of the school pupils. Many young people on these programmes have a history of below average performance and low motivation. However, the opportunity to attend System Group one day a week, combined with a day spent with a local garage, is proving a highly motivating and enjoyable experience for them.

26.   Arrangements for the provision of off-the-job training in motor vehicle are under-developed. Since the previous inspection, System Group has made a significant investment in accommodation and workshops for motor vehicle programmes. However, although level 2 learners attend day-release at the training centre, this is significantly reduced when learners progress to level 3, with many learners attending only two hours a week. These learners have insufficient time to complete their off-the-job training. Teaching and learning in motor vehicle is satisfactory overall but there is insufficient

practical work. Where practical work is done, learners on heavy goods vehicle programmes have insufficient specialist resources.

Leadership and management

27.   The management of provision in transportation operations and maintenance is satisfactory. Programme review meetings, where all aspects of the programme are discussed, are effective. Objectives for the training programmes are clear and specific and they are monitored and evaluated effectively. Staff work effectively as a team and internal communications are good. Staff are occupationally competent, and are well supported by managers in developing their skills as tutors and assessors.

28.   Development and reinforcement of learners' awareness of equality and diversity is satisfactory. For each review, a specific topic is highlighted and staff and apprentices are provided with relevant information on which to base their discussions. Reasonable adjustments are made to accommodate learners with disabilities. One company, with financial help from System Group, has modified a truck to enable a disabled driver to complete the training programme.

29.   The self-assessment report is generally accurate. Assessors and staff are fully involved in the self-assessment process and the company's quality improvement strategies. However, the report does not cover all aspects of the *Common Inspection Framework*, and there is no separate section or grade covering achievements and standards for the sector subject area.

Information and communications technology

Satisfactory: Grade 3

Context

30.   All ICT programmes have been introduced since the previous inspection, and most started in the last eighteen months. System Group has just over 200 learners on programmes in ICT. Currently 158 learners are on Train to Gain, 11 are on work-based learning for young people, and 39 are on **learndirect** programmes. Provision includes Train to Gain information technology qualification (ITQ) programmes, **learndirect** IT, and advanced apprenticeships in IT. System Group is also subcontracted to deliver an advanced apprenticeship training programme for Gen II, another training provider in the region. The content of the ITQ programme is designed in consultation with employers and learners. The ICT delivery team includes a manager and three trainer-assessors.

Strengths

- Good development of skills
- Good support for employers and learners

Areas for improvement

- Insufficient monitoring of the quality of teaching and learning

Achievement and standards

31.   Development of learners' skills is good. Learners develop new skills and apply their learning well within the workplace. On the ITQ and **learndirect** programmes, they gain confidence and improve their existing skills in using computer applications for work-related tasks, and for personal use. Many learners on the ITQ programme have been self-taught and have never completed formal training in ICT. Apprentices make good progress in applying both their on-the-job and off-the-job training. Employers value the skills and abilities that trainees bring to their companies and learners soon take on additional responsibilities. In one company, for example, a trainee has been given responsibility for dealing with networking queries.

32.   On the **learndirect** programmes, learners complete personal goals such as upgrading their skills, or they learn how to make more efficient use of computer applications. Some also gain qualifications. Learners produce good work. Employers comment on learners' increased efficiency in using application features such as mail-merge to send personalised letters. As identified in the self-assessment report, the apprenticeship programme only started in 2006, and achievement data is not yet available. However, apprentices have made good progress in achieving units towards their qualifications, and all learners who started on the programme are still in learning.

Quality of provision

33.   Learners and employers receive good support from System Group. Very clear and detailed information and guidance is provided to both employers and learners about the content and structure of programmes. Contact details such as email addresses and mobile telephone numbers for staff are supplied to all learners, and they are encouraged to contact staff for help outside formal training sessions. Workplace supervisors, employers and ICT training staff work well together to support learners and address issues that affect their learning. Communication between staff, learners and employers is good.

34.   Well designed workbooks have been developed to support learners on the ITQ and **learndirect** programmes. The workbooks use text and graphics to illustrate functions and features of different computer applications. Learners on the ITQ programmes receive individual copies of the workbooks, and they are made available for learners at **learndirect** centres. Learners receive good individual support to help them complete assessment tasks. Initial assessment is satisfactory and identifies existing computer knowledge and skills. Literacy and numeracy needs are also identified during initial assessment, and a skills for life tutor provides support for learners as required.

35.   Teaching and learning are satisfactory overall. Trainers are well qualified and have a wide range of experience in the computer industry, and of delivering training in ICT. They also have assessor and teaching qualifications, or are working towards them. Accommodation and resources are satisfactory. Tutors give good and clear explanations of technical terms for new computer users. Sessions are well planned to cover the content, but insufficient attention is given to teaching and learning activities such as group discussion, project work or practical work.

36.   Plans for assessing learning are clear and effective. E-portfolios are used effectively to monitor learner progress with assessment tasks. Initial assessment is satisfactory and tutors use skills audits, questionnaires and question and answer sessions to assess learners' existing knowledge and skills. Individual learning plans are used on the **learndirect** programmes but they contain insufficient detail of the actual plans for learning. Targets that are set relate to assessment rather than learning. Progress with learning is discussed during reviews, but not often recorded.

37.   The provision meets the needs of learners and employers. Good and effective marketing of the ITQ programme has resulted in multiple enrolments of learners from a range of different companies. The ITQ programme is developed in consultation with employers to ensure the content meets the needs of both employers and their employees. ICT staff work well with employers and learners to identify appropriate content for both the ITQ and apprenticeship programmes.

Leadership and management

38.   Management of ICT provision is satisfactory. Communication is very good within the team and staff are committed to ensuring learners receive a positive learning experience. Regular informal and formal meetings take place where action points are clearly identified and followed up. Internal verification is satisfactory. Provider staff have a good relationship with employers. Promotion of equality of opportunity is satisfactory overall. Staff recognise the gender imbalance on the apprenticeship programmes, and plans are in place to address this. The self-assessment report did not cover all the key questions of the *Common Inspection Framework*, and did not identify all the strengths and areas for improvement found during inspection.

39.   Monitoring of the quality of teaching and learning is insufficient. The focus of the observation system is on the presentation skills of tutors, rather than on teaching activities and learning outcomes. Action plans do not focus sufficiently on specific improvements that need to be made to improve the quality of teaching and learning. The ineffective use of previous lesson observations was identified as an area for

improvement in the **learndirect** self-assessment report. An audit system is in place which checks compliance with quality improvement procedures but this does not identify incomplete individual learning plans or identify areas for improvement that relate to the recording of learners' progress.

Accounting and finance

Good: Grade 2

Context

40. System Group has 116 learners on programmes in accountancy and finance. Currently 13 are advanced apprentices, 24 apprentices and two learners are taking NVQs at level 4. There are 59 learners are on work-based learning programmes in accounting and payroll administration franchised by Kendal College. All work-based learners are employed. Fifteen learners aged 16-18 from two local schools are working towards NVQ level 2 accounting. Three learners are taking Train to Gain programmes. Programmes are delivered by one full-time and four part-time staff. The training manager also delivers, assesses and internally verifies some programmes. Internal verification is also carried out by one other member of staff.

Strengths

- Good overall success rates on apprenticeships
- Good progression to higher levels
- Good development of skills
- Strong leadership and management of the area

Areas for improvement

- Incomplete arrangements for the identification and provision of additional learning support
- Under-developed observation system to support improvement in provision

Achievement and standards

41.   Overall success rates on apprenticeships are good. In two of the last three years, success rates were above 85%, and significantly above national averages. Timely success rates on apprenticeships, however, are poor. Managers have identified problems in interpreting the criteria for key skills exemptions as a factor contributing to this, and the situation has now been resolved. Overall and timely success rates on advanced apprenticeship and NVQ programmes are satisfactory, but pass rates in the last three AAT examination sessions show improvement. Programmes for school pupils started in 2006 and are delivered over two years. These pupils are making satisfactory progress towards achievement of vocational qualifications. At the time of inspection, the small number of learners on Train to Gain programmes are making satisfactory progress. The standard of all learners work is at least satisfactory and much is good. Most learners produce good workplace evidence and their portfolios are well presented.

42.   Progression to higher levels is good. Most learners progress from level 2 to level 3. Many learners who started in 2003, when accounting provision was first introduced, have achieved AAT level 4 and have now progressed to study higher level professional qualifications.

43.   Learners develop good skills. All learners demonstrate good development of knowledge and understanding of accountancy or payroll administration according to the level and stage of their programme. Many work-based learners apply their learning well, and with growing confidence, in their job roles. They take on increasing responsibility and more complex tasks. Some learners have gained promotion. For example, one learner is now a credit controller, one is in charge of accounts administration for two companies, and another is responsible for delivering basic accounting training to other staff and clients.

Quality of provision

44.   Teaching and learning are at least satisfactory, and some teaching is good. All learners attend off-the-job training sessions every fortnight at the System Group centre. Programmes are well structured. Most learners receive a scheme of work at the start of their training. Some lesson plans are insufficiently detailed. Learners are uninspired in some lessons which lack sufficient variety and challenge. However, most learners are attentive, work well and enjoy their programmes. Facilities are good and learners are provided with the textbooks and workbooks required for their course. However, there is little use of information and learning technology to support learning. Assessment and internal verification are satisfactory, although standardisation activities have only recently been introduced.

45.   The weakness relating to key skills, identified at the previous inspection, has been addressed and arrangements for key skills are now satisfactory. The framework now requires different key skills, and they are introduced earlier in learners' programmes. Appropriate information is provided on how to build key skill portfolios. Learners do not generally sit key skill tests until after portfolios have been completed. The

monitoring of progress towards key skills has recently improved. Most apprentices, who are not exempt, take application of number key skill at a higher level than the framework requires although they are not offered it at level 3.

46.   Programmes meet learners' and employers' needs. As identified in the self-assessment report, learners are offered flexible start dates, and alternative teaching sessions are available. Taster sessions for potential new learners are offered. Learners' understanding of employment rights and responsibilities has improved since the previous inspection and is now satisfactory.

47.   Arrangements for the identification and provision of additional learning support are incomplete. Initial assessments of literacy and numeracy are not carried out for NVQ learners. Initial assessment of other learners is satisfactory. Arrangements to support identified needs of some school pupils are insufficient. Although these needs have been communicated to the school, no discussions have taken place as to who should provide this support. No learners on apprenticeship programmes have been identified as having additional needs.

Leadership and management

48.   Leadership and management are good. There is clear direction for the development of the accounting provision. Staff in the area work closely with the recruitment branch of the organisation to promote accounting courses. Staff are well qualified and experienced in accounting. The team has grown from two to six members over the last eighteen months. Although newer staff are less experienced in training and assessment, they are very well supported and staff development is good. Sharing of best practice and internal communications are good. Staff are well informed and work effectively as a team. The use of management information and targets supports the monitoring of the provision.

49.   The promotion of equality of opportunity is satisfactory although monitoring and reinforcement of learners understanding is insufficiently rigorous. The self-assessment process is inclusive and broadly accurate.

50.   As recognised in the self-assessment report, the observation system is under-developed and does not sufficiently support improvements. Observer training has only recently been completed. Lesson observations focus mainly on teacher presentation skills. Insufficient judgements are made on learning, attainment and other aspects of teaching. Observations of reviews and induction are still in development.

Annex

Learners' achievements

Success rates on **work-based learning 'apprenticeship' programmes** managed by the provider 2004 to 2006

Programme	End Year	Success rate	No. of learners*	Provider NVQ rate **	National NVQ rate**	Provider framework rate**	National framework rate**
Advanced Apprenticeships	03-04	overall	3	33%	48%	33%	31%
		timely	5	0%	30%	0%	19%
	04-05	overall	7	57%	48%	29%	34%
		timely	5	60%	31%	20%	21%
	05-06	overall	46	74%	54%	74%	44%
		timely	50	60%	34%	60%	27%
Apprenticeships	03-04	overall	15	80%	47%	73%	32%
		timely	24	33%	24%	29%	16%
	04-05	overall	51	73%	50%	73%	38%
		timely	46	37%	29%	37%	22%
	05-06	overall	87	72%	58%	72%	53%
		timely	93	42%	38%	41%	33%

*   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'

Success rates on **work-based learning 'Train to Gain' programmes** managed by the provider 2006 to 2007

Programme	End Year	Success rate	No. of learners*	Provider NVQ rate**
Train to Gain ***	2006-07	overall	853	95%
		timely	-	-

*   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'

***   Includes 'Train to Gain' programmes in driving goods vehicles and lift truck operation, but not ITQ.

Outcomes on **learndirect programmes**

Q4 2006-07	Enrolments	Counted for data	Success rate (%)	Withdrawal rate (%)
All sectors	713	603	54	15
ICT	269	196	50	23
skills for life	431	407	56	11

Equality and diversity

Q4 2006-07	All Ethnic Groups	Asian or Asian British	Black or Black British	Chinese/Other	Mixed	Not Known	White
Enrolments	713	11	4	8	3	1	686
Completion rate (%)	86	100	100	83	67	100	86
Achievement rate (%)	61	100	67	120	100	100	59
Success rate (%)	54	100	100	75	67	100	52
Withdrawal rate (%)	15	0	0	13	33	0	15

Website: www.ofsted.gov.uk