

# L.I.T.S. Limited

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321476

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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' monitoring 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:

- Engineering and manufacturing technologies

## Description of the provider

1. L.I.T.S. Limited (LITS) was founded in 1981 and incorporated in September 2002. The head office is based in Southeast London. LITS provides support and assessment services to national engineering companies. To facilitate its national support and assessment services provision, LITS employs 13 training advisors, each responsible for managing different regions.
2. LITS holds an LSC contract for advanced apprenticeships in engineering and manufacturing, and a national Train to Gain contract. All apprentice learners are aged between 18 and 25 and Train to Gain aged over 19. The money LITS receives is passed directly to employers who then pay LITS for the services it provides.
3. LITS currently provides a training and assessment service to over 100 employers throughout the UK. Approximately half of LITS income is from government-funded programmes. LITS is a recognised assessment centre for a number of awarding bodies. It also has affiliations to a number of national trade associations.
4. At the time of the inspection 148 learners were on advanced apprenticeships, predominantly in engineering maintenance, with a small number in manufacturing and production. Learners are employed by a number of international, national and regional employers in making and maintaining lifts and escalators, engineering maintenance, paper-making, cement and other process and service industries. A further 226 learners on the Train to Gain programme were working towards NVQs at level 3 in the lift, escalator and maintenance sectors.

## Summary of grades awarded

<b>Effectiveness of provision</b>		<b>Satisfactory: Grade 3</b>
Work-based learning	Contributory grade:	Satisfactory: Grade 3
Train to Gain	Contributory grade:	Satisfactory: Grade 3
Capacity to improve		Satisfactory: Grade 3
<b>Achievement and standards</b>		<b>Satisfactory: Grade 3</b>
Work-based learning	Contributory grade:	Satisfactory: Grade 3
Train to Gain	Contributory grade:	Satisfactory: Grade 3
<b>Quality of provision</b>		<b>Satisfactory: Grade 3</b>
Work-based learning	Contributory grade:	Satisfactory: Grade 3
Train to Gain	Contributory grade:	Satisfactory: Grade 3
<b>Leadership and management</b>		<b>Satisfactory: Grade 3</b>
Work-based learning	Contributory grade:	Satisfactory: Grade 3
Train to Gain	Contributory grade:	Satisfactory: Grade 3
Equality of opportunity	Contributory grade:	Satisfactory: Grade 3

## Sector subject area

Engineering and manufacturing technologies	<b>Satisfactory: Grade 3</b>
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## Overall judgement

### Effectiveness of provision

#### Satisfactory: Grade 3

Work-based learning  
Train to Gain

Contributory grade: Satisfactory: Grade 3

Contributory grade: Satisfactory: Grade 3

5. The overall effectiveness of the provision is satisfactory for advanced apprenticeship and Train to Gain programmes. Achievement and standards, quality of provision and leadership and management are satisfactory. Equality of opportunity is satisfactory.

#### Capacity to improve

#### Satisfactory: Grade 3

6. Capacity to improve is satisfactory. LITS has taken effective steps in some areas to improve the provision since the previous inspection. Overall success rates in advanced apprenticeships of 62.2% are broadly in line with the national average across the various specialist areas of engineering and manufacturing technologies. Timely success rates are generally below the national average. However, learners are making good progress and many have achieved within timescales but are awaiting awarding body confirmation. Insufficient progress has been made in tackling some issues raised at the previous inspection. These remain as areas for improvement. For example, the amount of workplace assessment carried out by direct observation for lift engineers. Development plans are accurate in identifying issues but progress is slow in some areas. Equal opportunities, identified as an area for improvement at the previous inspection, has been strengthened. Good staff development has continued and formal and informal communication within the small management team is effective in identifying issues to be resolved.
7. Self-assessment is satisfactory. The report was prepared by senior managers and circulated to other staff for comment. Regular contact with learners and employers enable staff to be aware of their views. LITS has not formally included the views from learners, employers and subcontractors in the self-assessment process. The process does not yet include the recently awarded Train to Gain provision. The self-assessment report correctly emphasises many of the strengths and areas for improvement of the provision. LITS has prepared detailed development plans to support the self-assessment report yet these plans focus mainly on areas for improvement from previous inspection reports.

## Key strengths

- Good achievement of a wide range of additional qualifications
- Well motivated learners who are knowledgeable of the NVQ process
- Good management of training by skilled training advisors
- Very effective partnership working with employers

## Key areas for improvement

- Inadequate workplace assessment by direct observation for most learners
- Insufficiently thorough assessment of learners by expert witnesses

- Insufficient use of management information to inform target-setting for improvement
- Slow implementation of some quality assurance processes

## Main findings

### Achievement and standards

#### Satisfactory: Grade 3

Work-based learning  
Train to Gain

Contributory grade: Satisfactory: Grade 3  
Contributory grade: Satisfactory: Grade 3

8. Overall success rates in advanced apprenticeships, at 62.2%, are satisfactory and broadly in line with the national averages for engineering and manufacturing programmes. Timely success rates are below the national average. However, learners are making good progress and many have achieved within timescales but are awaiting awarding body confirmation.
9. Achievement of a wide range of additional qualifications relevant to the industries in which the learners are employed is good. Qualifications gained include manual handling, abrasive wheel regulations, crane safety and environmental health. Some learners are working towards higher national qualifications and degrees. Specialist courses on quality assurance or other machine operations are also arranged when needed.
10. The standard of learners' work is good. Learner's portfolios are very well structured and clearly laid out. Learners on all programmes demonstrate a good understanding of the NVQ structure and are well aware of their own progress towards completing their qualification. Skills development is good and supported well by learners working on complex industrial plant and equipment. These judgements are identified in the provider's self-assessment report.

### Quality of provision

#### Satisfactory: Grade 3

Work-based learning  
Train to Gain

Contributory grade: Satisfactory: Grade 3  
Contributory grade: Satisfactory: Grade 3

11. The quality of provision is satisfactory. Learners are particularly well supported by their employers, a strength identified in the self-assessment report. Employers allocate learners to well qualified and experienced engineers, all of whom provide expert training and technical guidance. In addition, managers are aware of the need to provide opportunities for learners to gather suitable evidence for their NVQ portfolios and as far as possible structure their work programmes to enhance training opportunities for learners. One employer extended the training period significantly for a Train to Gain learner with poor self-confidence.
12. LITS assesses all learners at the start of the programme to identify any additional learning needs. A fully trained and experienced member of staff is employed to work with learners where a literacy or numeracy support need has been identified. Where learners are diagnosed as dyslexic, LITS arranges the loan of a laptop computer to help them write their portfolios and provides a one-to-one support programme.
13. The range of provision is good and fully meets the needs of learners and employers. Some lift engineering apprentices are recruited after they have gained an NVQ at level 2. They complete a LITS devised project to enable them to develop their key skills and pass their key skills tests. Other apprentices achieve their key skills as part of the first year of their



apprenticeship when they are undertaking an NVQ level 2 at a local college of further education or training provider.

14. Reviews of learners' progress and target-setting are satisfactory. Good care is taken to ensure learners are well matched to their work-placement. Assessors visit learners around six times a year to review progress and set new targets for qualification progression. Employers also regularly review learners' progress.
15. Workplace assessment by direct observation is insufficient. This was identified as an area for improvement at the previous inspection. Apprentices following combined working practices in the paper industry are continuously assessed by observation by employers' team leaders who are qualified assessors. However, learners following mechanical and electrical engineering are assessed by direct observation in the workplace only once during their apprenticeship and lift engineering apprentices have no assessment by direct observation.
16. Arrangements for assessment by expert witnesses in the workplace are insufficiently thorough. LITS relies in the main on witness testimony to confirm workplace competency. Its assessors do not have sufficient opportunity to directly evaluate learners' practical skills or their ability to work safely in the workplace. Assessment of the NVQs is largely by review of portfolio evidence. Witness testimonies often fail to fully relate to, or match with, the standards required for the qualification. Expert witnesses rarely provide developmental and clear feedback to learners on their skills development and competency levels. LITS is planning to introduce guidelines for expert witnesses to improve the quality of their testimony but this has yet to be fully implemented. Both areas for improvement have been identified by the provider in the self-assessment report.

## Leadership and management

### Satisfactory: Grade 3

Work-based learning

Contributory grade: Satisfactory: Grade 3

Train to Gain

Contributory grade: Satisfactory: Grade 3

**Equality of opportunity**

Contributory grade: Satisfactory: Grade 3

17. Leadership and management are satisfactory. Training advisors are particularly effective. They are very experienced in the various trades and are qualified as assessors and verifiers. Each adviser manages a caseload of advanced apprentices and Train to Gain learners and employers in a particular geographical area. They develop excellent relationships with learners and employers and visit the learners at least every eight weeks, reviewing their progress, coaching and supporting learners and monitoring portfolios of evidence. Some learners are visited more frequently depending on the needs of the learner and employer. Training advisors also take part in the monthly progress reviews at colleges where learners work towards technical certificates. Senior managers and training advisors work effectively together and meet twice yearly to review the provision.
18. Learners continue to benefit from the good partnership working between LITS and their employers. Most of the employers working with LITS have been doing so for several years, and all have built strong and supportive links with the company. LITS provides short training courses and assessment support for employers commercially. In some cases, employers offer these additional courses to learners. LITS plays a significant role in the recruitment of apprentices by employers, providing a thorough initial assessment of

literacy and numeracy skill levels. LITS also provides support in the form of detailed explanations of what the advanced apprenticeship and Train to Gain involves and guidance on choosing the most appropriate NVQ and technical certificate training providers.

19. Business planning is satisfactory. The directors have a good understanding of the current trends in the industry they are supporting, and clear criteria for determining whether or not to take on new areas of business.
20. LITS makes insufficient use of management information to plan improvements, particularly in relation to retention and achievement rates, and for monitoring participation and performance rates by different types of learners across different geographical areas and by different apprenticeship programmes.
21. Progress with some aspects of the arrangements to secure quality assurance and improvement has been slow. Internal verification processes meet the requirements of the awarding organisations but do not sufficiently support assessors and the assessment of learners' work. The verification of assessors by direct observation is insufficient. Opportunities to share best assessment practices are inadequate. Some learners do not understand the role of the internal verifier. LITS has introduced surveys to gather feedback from learners and employers, but the employer survey has not been carried out since 2004.
22. Equal opportunities arrangements are satisfactory. Learners are highly valued and respected members of the workforces in which they are employed. Training advisors and employers develop good relationships with learners and informal communications between training advisors and employers remain good.
23. Training advisers and full-time staff have adequate access to good training opportunities including training in equality of opportunity. LITS's management sufficiently keeps abreast of new developments and legislation in equality of opportunity. The management team communicates these developments adequately to training advisers.
24. LITS takes effective action to ensure the safety and wellbeing of learners in their care. Learners trust LITS's staff and know who to go to if there is a problem. There are appeals procedures relating to assessment and grievance policies and the induction process ensures that learners are well aware of procedures. Equal opportunities is reinforced well at induction. Learners have a satisfactory understanding of equality of opportunity.
25. LITS are aware that certain groups are under-represented in engineering. LITS is not responsible for recruitment, but employers and LITS promote engineering in an inclusive manner at conferences, and in schools and trade magazines. Female learners are encouraged and supported and a female training adviser is employed by LITS to support this. The management team is aware of the under-representation of minority ethnic groups in engineering training nationally.
26. LITS sufficiently reinforces learners' understanding of equality of opportunity during the training programme and training advisors check understanding through the frequent learners' reviews. The company has satisfactory policies such as disability statements and equal opportunities. The company has introduced employment rights and responsibilities policies and related tasks for learners to complete at the start of the training programme.

Learners know who to approach if they feel they are being bullied or harassed in the workplace.

27. LITS evaluates employers' equal opportunities policies and procedures. They advise employers on policy and employers must use LITS's policies and procedures if they do not have their own. Records of employers' policies are retained by LITS. However, LITS does not sufficiently monitor the practice of employers. There is insufficient management information to use as a basis for the review of equality of opportunity, for example the achievement of different types of learners. Procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements.

## What learners like:

- Support from employers and LITS advisors and feeling valued
- Structure of NVQ programmes
- Good experience and qualifications
- Frequent feedback on progress
- Variety of jobs and learning new skills
- 'The LITS adviser is always available if you have a problem'
- 'I have freedom to control my own programme'
- 'I am gaining skills for life that will give me jobs in the future'
- 'I find the practical and technical aspects a perfect balance between brain and hands'

## What learners think could improve:

- 'Sometimes the time the employer allocates for portfolio work is not available'
- 'It would help if the NVQ standards were more closely aligned with the work we do'
- Length of college days
- 'There are times when it would help if the assessors had experience that more closely matches the NVQ they are assessing'
- 'Make sure all the departments we spend time in are relevant to the NVQ and are able to provide suitable work'
- 'Some of the apprentice framework elements are presented in ways that are not appropriate to the older learner'