

The Training and Learning Company

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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.

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' 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:

- Retail and commercial enterprise
- Business, administration and law

Description of the provider

1. The Training and Learning Company (TLC) is a subsidiary of The End Product Limited. TLC is an independent training provider with 15 staff and two directors. It has contracted with the Hampshire and Isle of Wight Learning and Skills Council (LSC) since May 2006 to deliver apprenticeships and advanced apprenticeships in the retail sector. LSC funding represents approximately 80% of TLC's business. TLC acts as a subcontractor in Wales for the delivery of apprenticeships and has recently been awarded a Train to Gain contract for the South East.
2. TLC has provision in retail and commercial enterprise and business, administration and law. Learners are employed by retailers across Hampshire, Surrey, Berkshire and the Isle of Wight. Currently TLC has 92 learners. In retail and commercial enterprise there are 30 learners of whom 29 are on apprenticeships and advanced apprenticeships in retail skills and one learner is on a warehousing apprenticeship. In business, administration and law there are 62 learners, 58 are on customer service apprenticeships and three are on team leading apprenticeships, with one learner on an administration apprenticeship.
3. In 2006, around 70% of the working age population in Hampshire were qualified at or above NVQ 2 or equivalent qualifications, compared with 68% in the South East and the national rate of 64%. Unemployment in Hampshire is 4.5% compared with the national rate of 5.3%. According to the 2001 census, the proportion of people from minority ethnic groups in the area is 4.6% compared with 9.1% in England.

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: Satisfactory: Grade 3

Sector subject areas

Retail and commercial enterprise	Good: Grade 2
Business, administration and law	Good: Grade 2

Overall judgement

Effectiveness of provision

Good: Grade 2

4. The overall effectiveness of TLC's provision is good. Achievement and standards are good overall and most learners make very good progress. The acquisition of workplace and social skills is good for many learners. The standard of learners' work is satisfactory.
5. The quality of provision is good. Coaching and learning are good in all programme areas. The range of programmes and activities is good and are well matched to meet learners' and employers' needs. Guidance and support for learners is good.
6. Leadership and management are good. The strategic development of employer links is good, as are the arrangements for quality improvement. Managers provide clear direction for continuous improvement to raise achievements. Equality of opportunity is satisfactory.

Capacity to improve

Good: Grade 2

7. TLC's capacity to improve is good. Arrangements for quality improvement are good. The quality framework is well designed to link closely to learners' experience and the learning cycle. The annual quality monitoring plan is systematic with a comprehensive range of processes to quality assure key activities. TLC has developed a clear strategy and policy for quality assurance that is well understood by staff. This is reinforced by an audit points system that measures the quality of assessors' work. Data is used to monitor the effectiveness of quality assurance and to provide information for managers, quality improvement and the self-assessment process.
8. Leadership and management of quality improvement are good. All staff are actively involved in continuous improvement to benefit learners and raise achievement. Particularly good improvements have been made to learners' progress since 2006/07. TLC carries out frequent monitoring of employers and learners views. Learners' feedback is regularly collected through surveys, sampling by telephone interviews and a detailed questionnaire on completion of their qualification. Early leavers are also contacted for feedback to inform quality improvement. TLC are in regular contact with employers and use their frequent visits to obtain feedback. An employment partnership adviser has recently been appointed and this post includes a substantial quality assurance role to further develop the quality of TLC's work with employers.
9. The quality improvement plan covers the main aspects of provision, including equality of opportunity and health and safety. Much of the planning for improvement focuses on further development of areas that are already adequate and reflects TLC's strong commitment to continuous improvement. However, some quality improvement targets are too general.
10. Self-assessment is good. TLC has not previously been inspected and the self-assessment report for 2006/07 is the first the organisation has produced. Particularly good use of learner and employer feedback is made by TLC to inform and support the judgements

made in the self-assessment report. TLC staff are fully involved in the self-assessment process. The self-assessment report is broadly accurate. Inspectors agreed with most of the strengths identified. The few areas for improvement in the report were judged by inspectors to be satisfactory.

Key strengths

- Very good progress for learners
- Very effective coaching and learning
- Well matched programmes to meet learners' needs
- Good leadership and management
- Good arrangements for quality improvement

Key areas for improvement

- None identified

Main findings

Achievement and standards

Good: Grade 2

11. Achievement and standards are good, as identified in the self-assessment report. In 2006/07 overall success rates were good at 83% and the success rates for customer service apprenticeships were particularly good. Pass rates for technical certificates are excellent and are currently at 100%. In 2006/07 timely success rates for customer service were satisfactory but were low in team leading. Current data indicates that most learners are making very good progress and timely success rates are significantly improving. Most learners achieve their frameworks within six months and many complete earlier. The development of learners' work based skills is good. The standard of learners' work in their portfolios is satisfactory.
12. Learners' progress is very good. Most current apprentices and advanced apprentices are making rapid progress towards completion of their frameworks within a challenging timeframe. Current data indicates that timely success rates in retail skills apprenticeships for 2006/07 have improved significantly in 2007/08 and 76% of leavers have achieved their full framework. In 2006/07 timely success rates for customer service were satisfactory but low in team leading. Current data indicates that most learners are making very good progress on these programmes and timely success rates are significantly improving. Most learners achieve their frameworks within six months.
13. The acquisition of workplace and social skills is good for many learners. Most develop improved skills in dealing with customers and some learners have progressed within their employment. Learners are well motivated and enjoy their programmes. The standard of learners' work demonstrated in their portfolios is satisfactory.
14. In customer service and business administration, pass rates for technical certificates are excellent and are currently 100%. In retail skills, the rate of achievement of key skills and the technical certificate is good. Some learners take relevant additional qualifications offered by their employer.

Quality of provision

Good: Grade 2

15. The quality of provision is good, as recognised in the self-assessment report. Teaching and learning are good. Coaching and learning in the workplace are very effective and fully meet the needs of the programme. Learners have roles and responsibilities that enable them to develop a wide range of skills. Learners' individual programme and employment skills needs are supported well. TLC's involvement of employers in learning is very good. Effective action has been taken to improve the balance between the number of male and female learners.
16. TLC's arrangements for progress reviews are good. Reviews are frequent and learners are set clear and appropriate targets. Assessors have good working relationships with employers and learners and communicate progress, planning and target-setting well.

17. Initial assessment is satisfactory and additional learning needs are identified effectively. Learners with literacy, language and numeracy skills needs are well supported by TLC staff and additional support is available. All learners taking key skills have appropriate diagnostic assessments and the results are used accurately to establish their targets.
18. The suitability of assessment is satisfactory. Assessment is frequent and arrangements are flexible to meet the needs of the learner and their employer. Assessments are carefully recorded and the assessor feedback provided to learners is prompt, clear and accurate.
19. The extent to which the programmes and activities meet the needs and interests of learners is good. Job roles, responsibilities and levels of work are carefully matched against the requirements of the qualifications to ensure that learners are on the correct programme and level. The programmes are well integrated with individual employers' training schemes. TLC staff work closely with employers to identify evidence and assessment opportunities for learners.
20. Overall support arrangements for learners are good. Workplaces are of a good standard with an appropriate environment for learning and assessment opportunities. Assessors provide learners with good levels of support to resolve any work related issues or personal needs. Employers work well with TLC staff to support learner's progress through the apprenticeship and assessment programme.
21. The information and advice provided by TLC is satisfactory. Learners' induction is satisfactory. Health and safety are covered appropriately at induction and reinforced well during the programme. Outcomes for Every Child Matters are appropriate.

Leadership and management

Good: Grade 2

Equality of opportunity

Contributory grade: Satisfactory: Grade 3

22. Leadership and management are good. This was recognised in the self-assessment. Operational management of programmes is good and leadership provides a clear focus on raising achievement. TLC's performance management is good. Appropriate performance indicators have been identified and these are closely monitored and reported on. Management information systems are used well to produce reports that monitor the performance of a wide range of activities including learners' progress, achievement and staff performance. Staff are clear about their roles and responsibilities. Most staff are well qualified and experienced. New staff receive a well planned induction. TLC has a comprehensive system for staff appraisal, which links effectively to relevant staff development. All staff have access to a broad range of staff development opportunities that are planned on an annual basis and directly link to meeting learners' needs. Communications within TLC are good.
23. TLC's strategic development of employer links is good. Employer needs are very effectively met. TLC carries out detailed analysis of individual employers' learning and development programmes and carefully matches these to the relevant apprentice frameworks. TLC's pilot programmes are designed well and initially trialled to ensure that

the requirements of the employer programme and the apprentice framework are met. Communications with employers are particularly good and are well supported by TLC staff. TLC has very good relationships with its employers and has a strong commitment to improving skills in the retail sector.

24. The management of resources is good. Resources are managed efficiently and effectively to achieve value for money. Staff caseloads are monitored well to support frequent learner assessment visits. Some staff are relatively new and they receive good support and training to carry out their roles. The quality of TLC's resources and learning materials are satisfactory.
25. The strategy for literacy, language and numeracy support is satisfactory. TLC has well established arrangements in place with other providers for the provision of additional specialist support and also for staff advice and guidance. Staff training to enable TLC staff to provide literacy, language and numeracy support is at an early stage.
26. Assessment practices and internal verification arrangements are satisfactory. The observation, sampling and standardisation activities are well planned and thorough. Internal verification processes are linked effectively to quality arrangements through TLC's management information systems.
27. The procedures for safeguarding learners meet government requirements. Staff and learners understand the policy and procedures for safeguarding. Appropriate vetting checks and recent training have been carried out for staff and arrangements for new staff are appropriate.
28. Arrangements for quality improvement are good. TLC's quality framework is closely linked to improving learners' qualification success rates. Staff, learners and employers are fully involved in self-assessment and the quality improvement system is supported well by good use of accurate data, clear guidelines and an audit process that is effective in identifying areas for improvement.
29. Equality of opportunity is satisfactory. TLC has a clear strategy for equality of opportunity that identifies developments for improvement. Some of these improvement strategies are at an early stage. The policies and procedures for equality of opportunity are satisfactory and cover bullying and harassment and grievance and appeals. However, these are not provided to learners. Learners receive adequate information on equality of opportunity at induction. However, there is insufficient information on equality and diversity and TLC's procedures in their programme handbook. Learners understand the complaints process which is easily accessible and promoted effectively.
30. Staff have received some training in equality of opportunity and their understanding of equality and diversity is satisfactory. TLC provides training staff with useful information on equality and diversity for teaching and learning. Assessors use the relevant units of the learners' NVQ effectively to promote learners' understanding of equality and diversity. This is reinforced at the frequent progress reviews however, learners' understanding of equality and diversity in the workplace is not sufficiently addressed. Arrangements for the monitoring of employers' arrangements for equality of opportunity are satisfactory. TLC has recently updated its marketing materials to improve promotion of equality of opportunity in recruitment. Learners' achievements are celebrated well.

31. TLC use of management information systems is satisfactory to monitor equality of opportunity. Regular reports are made on learners' progress, achievements and reasons for leaving, however these reports are insufficiently detailed to fully monitor comparisons between the different groups.

What learners like:

- Being able to get a qualification while at work
- Getting recognition for what I can do
- Assessment fits into my work activities
- Support for key skills
- One to one coaching
- Clear targets set for the next visit
- Improving my customer service skills
- Frequency of visits by my assessor
- The programmes matches my company training
- Staff are motivating and encouraging

What learners think could improve:

- The layout of the level 3 NVQ portfolio could be improved

Retail and commercial enterprise

Good: Grade 2

Context

32. TLC offers NVQ programmes at level 2 and level 3 to 31 learners in the retail and commercial enterprise sector skills area. Currently there are 19 learners undertaking apprenticeship training in retail skills at level 2 and 11 on level 3 advanced apprenticeships. One learner is on a level 2 apprentice programme in warehousing. Learners are employed in retail organisations. Assessment and training are provided at the learners' workplaces. Progress reviews are carried out at every visit.

Strengths

- Very good progress for learners
- Very effective coaching and learning
- Well matched programmes to meet learners' needs
- Good programme management

Areas for improvement

- None identified

Achievement and standards

33. Achievement and standards are good. TLC recognised this strength in its self-assessment report. Progress of learners is very good. Most apprentices and advanced apprentices are making rapid progress and are on target to complete their qualification within challenging programme end dates. In 2006/07 of the 78 learners who successfully achieved their full qualification 65% completed within 12 months. The success rate for apprentices in 2006/07 was satisfactory at 60%. However, current data indicates that this has improved significantly and 76% of 2007/08 leavers have achieved their full framework. Only two advanced apprentices have left the programme this year, of these one successfully completed the framework. Learners are well motivated and enjoy their programmes. The standard of learners' work demonstrated in their portfolios is satisfactory.

34. The acquisition of workplace and social skills is good for many learners. Employers and learners recognise this development and particularly the improved skills demonstrated by learners in dealing with customers. Some learners have progressed within their employment while on programme.

35. Key skills and the technical certificate are planned early in the programme and the rate of achievement is good. Some learners take relevant additional qualifications offered by the employer.

Quality of provision

36. The quality of provision is good. Teaching and learning are good. Coaching and learning are very effective in meeting the needs of learners and the needs of the programme. This was identified in the self-assessment. Learners' individual programme and employment skill needs are addressed well through the frequent visits of the training assessor. The evidence required for the technical certificate and key skill requirements is appropriately integrated into the NVQ programme. For most learners, employer training is good. Employers are appropriately involved in the NVQ programme and are fully aware of their learners' progress.
37. Arrangements for progress reviews are good. Learners' progress is reviewed frequently, normally during the regular assessment visits. Assessors set clear targets for the learner to achieve by the next visit. Assessors communicate well with employers and give clear details about planned visits. Employers and learners have an adequate knowledge of the NVQ process and the qualification requirements.
38. Initial assessment is satisfactory in identifying learners' individual support and learning needs. Appropriate individual tuition from TLC staff meets these needs well. Learners enjoy and benefit from the one-to-one coaching sessions with their assessors which are effective in addressing many of their literacy, language and numeracy support needs. Specialist and more intensive support is available from a local college when required.
39. The suitability of assessment is satisfactory. Assessment is frequent and flexible to meet the needs of the learner and their employer. Assessments are well recorded and the feedback to learners is clear and concise. Assessors visit learners in their workplace at least every four weeks, they are sensitive to learners working environment and complete their work discreetly. Assessors increase the frequency of their visits to support learners more as they near the completion of the qualification. Some learners are visited weekly to ensure timely completion of their full framework.
40. The extent to which the programmes and activities meet the needs and interests of learners is good. Job roles and responsibilities and levels of work are carefully matched against the qualifications to ensure that learners are following the correct level and type of programme. Programmes are agreed with both the learner and the employer to ensure it complements and enhances the acquisition of appropriate skills and knowledge. The programme for most learners is well integrated with employer's own training schemes. TLC staff work closely with employers to ensure that evidence and assessment opportunities for learners are identified and used.
41. Guidance and support for learners is good. Assessors form good working relationships with their learners and give good levels of support to resolve any work or personal issues and needs. Workplaces provide an appropriate environment for learning and assessment opportunities and employers provide good support. Learners have roles and responsibilities that enable them to develop a wide range of skills.
42. Information, advice and guidance are satisfactory. Learner induction is satisfactory. Learners receive an effective induction into their NVQ programme and this is supplemented with a useful information handbook. The essentials of health and safety are covered appropriately at induction and reinforced well during the programme.

Leadership and management

43. Leadership and management are good. This was recognised in the self-assessment report. Learning and assessment programmes are well managed and coordinated. Staff meetings are well structured and formal and informal communication are good. Roles and responsibilities are clearly defined and understood. Staff are recruited with good experience and receive good further development to achieve the appropriate qualifications. Staff are highly motivated and committed to the learners' success. Managers support promotion opportunities within the company and encourage staff to progress and develop.
44. The management information system is used effectively to support self-assessment, provide accurate management monitoring reports on issues such as learner qualification progression and staff performance.
45. TLC checks learners' workplaces thoroughly to ensure that they are appropriate. Employer placements are at least satisfactory and some offer very good training opportunities. Relationships with employers are strong and are reinforced through management visits. Resources are managed effectively. Learning materials and equipment are appropriate and staff caseloads are monitored carefully. Internal verification and assessment arrangements are satisfactory.
46. The self-assessment report is broadly accurate. Inspectors agreed with most of the strengths identified.
47. Arrangements for the promotion of equality of opportunity are satisfactory. Learners have a satisfactory understanding of equality and diversity and this is reinforced during progress reviews. However, learners' understanding of equality and diversity in the workplace is not sufficiently addressed. Learner success is celebrated by TLC at the employer's premises.

Business, administration and law

Good: Grade 2

Context

48. TLC currently has 61 level 2 apprentices and one advanced apprentice in business administration and law. Fifty-eight apprentices are working towards qualifications in customer service, with three learners in team leading and one in business administration. Learners are employed in large and small retail organisations. TLC recruits learners directly from the retail sector and all are employed. Learners' induction, individual coaching, on-the-job training and assessment are carried out in the workplace. Progress reviews are carried out during every visit.

Strengths

- Good success rates
- Very effective coaching and learning
- Well matched programmes to meet learners needs
- Good programme management

Areas for improvement

- None identified

Achievement and standards

49. Achievement and standards are good, as recognised in the self-assessment report. In 2006/07 overall success rates were good. For the small number of customer service and team leading apprentices, success rates were outstanding in customer services and good in team leading at 92% and 80% respectively. Pass rates for technical certificates are excellent and are currently at 100%. In 2006/07 timely success rates for customer service were satisfactory but were low in team leading. Current data indicates that most learners are making very good progress and timely success rates are significantly improving. Most learners achieve their frameworks within six months and many complete earlier. The development of learners' work based skills is good. The standard of learners' work in their portfolios is satisfactory.

Quality of provision

50. The quality of provision is good, as recognised in the self-assessment report. Teaching and learning are good. Coaching and learning in the workplace is very effective. Most employers have in-house training programmes that TLC has carefully matched to the requirements of the apprenticeship frameworks. On-the-job training is delivered effectively using a range of training modules, which learners complete at work. Smaller employers deliver on-the-job training through frequent individual coaching and mentoring. Learners' individual programme and employment skills needs are supported effectively by TLC staff. Provision for key skills and technical certificates are an integral feature of the overall training and learning programme. Involvement of employers is very

good. Employers are involved effectively in all aspects of the programme and receive detailed feedback of learner progress.

51. Progress reviews are generally good. Reviews are frequent and usually carried out during the assessment visit. Learners are set clear progression targets by the following assessment visit. Assessors have good working relationships with employers and communicate their planning for workplace visits effectively. They ensure that learners and employers have sufficient knowledge of the framework qualifications, processes and requirements.
52. Initial assessment is satisfactory and additional learning needs are identified appropriately. Learners with literacy, language and numeracy skills needs are well supported by TLC staff. Additional support is available from another provider. All learners taking key skills take a diagnostic assessment and the results are used well to establish appropriate progression targets and identify any support needs.
53. Assessment arrangements are satisfactory. Most assessments include some observation and questioning. Learners receive prompt and accurate feedback about their performance, which is accurately recorded. The frequency of TLC workplace visits is flexible and can be increased to meet the needs of individual learners who wish to complete their framework quickly.
54. The extent to which the programmes and activities meet the needs and interests of learners is good. TLC fully analyses the business needs of the employers and their staff. Job roles and responsibilities and levels of work are carefully matched against the qualification requirements to ensure that learners are following the most appropriate programme at a suitable level. Employers are actively involved across all aspects of the learners programme. They work well with TLC to identify suitable evidence collection and assessment opportunities at work.
55. Guidance and support for learners is good. Workplaces are of a good standard offering learners an appropriate environment for learning and assessment opportunities. Learners are members of workplace teams and are given roles and responsibilities that promote confidence and skills development. TLC has permanent assessors working in some companies with a full case load of learners. They have good relationships and communication with employers and learners. Many learners progress to other qualifications and some are successful in achieving key skills at a higher level.
56. The information, advice and guidance provided by TLC are satisfactory. Learner induction is satisfactory. Learners receive an effective induction into their NVQ programme and are provided with a useful information handbook. Key aspects of health and safety are covered appropriately at induction and further reinforced and promoted during the programme.

Leadership and management

57. Leadership and management are good. This was recognised in the self-assessment report. Learning and assessment programmes are well managed and coordinated. The programme manager is supported well by two team leaders, a team of assessors and a lead internal verifier. Staff roles and responsibilities are fully understood by all the team. Well qualified staff are recruited and have current occupational experience. New assessors are supported

well by their team leaders and the lead internal verifier, to achieve their assessor award. Internal verification and assessment arrangements are satisfactory. Resources are satisfactory and managed well to provide for and support learners and gain value for money.

58. Communication is good, both formally and informally through regular team meetings, monthly reporting and accompanied visits to the workplace. Staff meet regularly to discuss learner progress, share good practice and monitor performance. TLC's staff development programme includes a good range of standardised training programmes and staff participation levels are good.
59. Management information systems to monitor staff and learner performance are used well. Systems to monitor staff performance and learner achievement against key performance indicators are well planned. Promotion of health and safety is thorough and learners' knowledge and understanding is reinforced at all workplace visits.
60. The self-assessment report is broadly accurate. Inspectors agreed with most of the strengths identified.
61. Promotion of equality of opportunity is satisfactory. It takes place across all parts of the learners' programme and is reinforced effectively, however learners' understanding of equality and diversity in the workplace is not sufficiently addressed. TLC and employers celebrate learners' success well.

Annex

Learners' achievements

Success rates on **work-based learning apprenticeship programmes** managed by TLC between **2006 to 2007**

Programme	End Year	Success rate	No. of learners*	Provider/college NVQ rate**	National NVQ rate**	Provider/college framework rate**	National framework rate**
Advanced Apprenticeships	06-07	overall	8	50%	64%	50%	58%
		timely	8	38%	43%	38%	37%
Apprenticeships	06-07***	overall	96	65%	65%	65%	61%
		timely	102	24%	47%	24%	44%

* 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

** College/provider and national qualification success rates are calculated using LSC published data derived from the 'Individual Learning Record'

*** Rates adjusted with revised LSC data.