

Expedient Training Services Ltd

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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:

- Construction, planning and the built environment

Description of the provider

1. Expedient Training Services Ltd (ETS) was established in 2002. ETS operates from its Quay Corner Training Centre in Jarrow and offers training across the North East. ETS provides training in construction, plant, utilities, first aid and health and safety. Most ETS training programmes are funded directly by employers.
2. ETS has three directors who own the company and provide strategic and operational management. They are assisted by a development manager, administration manager and internal verifier. ETS has six training officers and seven administration staff. It has two subcontractors involved in its training; John Howard Assessments Ltd in construction, and Actions Ltd Engineering in motor vehicle. In 2006/07 ETS secured a directly funded Train to Gain contract through Tyne and Wear LSC.
3. ETS provides training and accreditation in construction to level 2 National Vocational Qualifications (NVQs) in roofing occupations, construction and civil engineering operations, fenestration installation, applied waterproof membranes, plant operations and gas network operations. ETS provides transportation to NVQ level 2 in driving goods vehicles and road passenger vehicle driving. It provides engineering to NVQ level 3 in service and repair of light motor vehicles. ETS has 55 learners in construction, six in engineering and seven in transportation. Almost all learners receive 18 hours training. Off-the-job training is provided at the ETS training centre. On-the-job training is carried out in the workplace by employers supported by ETS staff. Assessment is carried out by ETS assessors in the workplace. ETS has recently achieved the Matrix Standard.

Summary of grades awarded

Effectiveness of provision	Satisfactory: Grade 3
Train to Gain	Contributory grade: Satisfactory: Grade 3
Capacity to improve	Satisfactory: Grade 3
Achievement and standards	Good: Grade 2
Train to Gain	Contributory grade: Good: Grade 2
Quality of provision	Satisfactory: Grade 3
Train to Gain	Contributory grade: Satisfactory: Grade 3
Leadership and management	Satisfactory: Grade 3
Train to Gain	Contributory grade: Satisfactory: Grade 3
Equality of opportunity	Contributory grade: Satisfactory: Grade 3

Sector subject area

Construction, planning and the built environment	Satisfactory: Grade 3
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Overall judgement

Effectiveness of provision

Satisfactory: Grade 3

4. The overall effectiveness of provision is satisfactory. Achievement and standards are good, the quality of provision and leadership and management, including equality of opportunity, are satisfactory. Provision in construction, planning and the built environment is satisfactory.

Capacity to improve

Satisfactory: Grade 3

5. ETS has a satisfactory capacity to improve. It has maintained high overall success rates over the last two years. Success rates were 97% in 2007 and 79% in 2008. During 2008/09, success rates to date are 85%. Managers frequently monitor the progress of individual learners against their planned end dates, and take early actions to identify and resolve any slow progress by learners.
6. Quality assurance processes are incomplete. Arrangements for collecting learners' and employers' feedback are in place but no overall analysis takes place to contribute to self-assessment or action planning. Observation of assessment is established well but the observation of other key learning processes have yet to be implemented. Trial observations of teaching have been completed but the overall observation process is still being developed. ETS has a quality policy, a self-assessment process, and a quality improvement plan, as well as holding ISO 9000, a recognised quality award. However, its range of quality assurance processes have not yet been formulated into a coherent annual cycle of activities.
7. Service level agreements are in place for all subcontractors, and roles and responsibilities are defined clearly. However, ETS does not set targets for improving learner performance or experience, and its arrangements to monitor the work of subcontractors are unclear and insufficiently formalised. Although frequent meetings with its subcontractors take place, it does not record any actions agreed or follow these up at subsequent meetings.
8. Arrangements for self-assessment are satisfactory. The self-assessment report for 2007/08 is the first ETS has produced. The report is suitably evaluative and critical. It covers all key questions of the *Common Inspection Framework* effectively. Generally the key strengths and areas for improvement identified in the report are supported well by evidence. Staff and subcontractors have not been involved in the self-assessment process sufficiently. The quality improvement plan identifies a range of appropriate actions to resolve the areas for improvement. Inspection findings matched most of the key strengths and areas for improvement identified in the self-assessment report. However, a few key strengths were normal practice. Inspection grades generally matched those in

the self-assessment report, except for capacity to improve which was overstated. ETS has not previously been inspected.

Key strengths

- High overall success rates
- Good training
- Extensive range of specialist provision
- Very clear strategic focus and direction
- Effective strategies to maintain and improve success rates
- Good management of training
- Very good links with employers

Key areas for improvement

- Inadequate progress reviews
- Insufficiently developed information, advice and guidance for learners
- Insufficient use of target-setting
- Insufficiently developed arrangements to support learners' literacy and numeracy needs
- Incomplete quality assurance processes

Main findings

Achievement and standards

Good: Grade 2

9. Achievement and standards are good. Overall success rates are high. Most learners successfully complete their qualifications. In 2006/07 overall success rates were outstanding at 97% and almost all learners achieved within the planned end date of their training. In 2007/08, ETS took necessary action to withdraw learners from one employer taken over by another company. It also withdrew learners from an unsatisfactory employer. This had a negative affect on its overall success rate of 79% in 2008. Since ETS has held a Train to Gain contract it has had 194 leavers, of which 164 learners, 85% of the total number, have achieved their qualifications. High success rates were correctly identified as a strength in the self-assessment report. Learners make good progress and most complete in a timely manner. Currently no learners have declared disabilities or are from minority ethnic groups.
10. Where learners change employers or become redundant, contact is maintained to enable them to achieve at a later date. Most learners' portfolios are structured well and contain a good range of evidence. Learners in plant and gas network operations take full ownership of gathering evidence and compiling assessment portfolios. This is not developed as well in the subcontracted provision, where assessors develop and maintain portfolios for learners.

Quality of provision

Satisfactory: Grade 3

11. The quality of provision is satisfactory. Training is good and planned well. All learners complete an assessment of their current skill levels, which is validated through discussion with employers. Trainers use these assessments well to develop individual learning plans. Most off-the-job training takes place at one of ETS' training centres. Training staff recognise that many learners have concerns about returning to education and training. Trainers take great care to reassure learners and enable them to fully participate in training sessions. Trainers also carry out frequent and effective individual and small group on-the-job training and coaching sessions on-site. Learners' feedback on the effectiveness of these training sessions is very positive.
12. Induction arrangements are satisfactory. ETS promotes the NVO effectively as a means to provide a skilled workforce, and to improve health and safety awareness and standards. Induction has a strong focus on health and safety and on preparing learners for assessment in the workplace. Equality of opportunity is only covered superficially at induction and is not reinforced in other parts of the training. Learners are encouraged to provide feedback on their learning experience during the programme and are provided with clear details of how they

can do this. All learners complete a comprehensive initial assessment of their literacy and numeracy skills during induction. Details of the assessment are recorded well and discussed sensitively with learners. However, ETS has no formal arrangements to provide support in literacy and numeracy for learners during their training. Trainers and assessors provide good informal support for learners, which includes help with completing assessment documents and portfolio building. Learners' feedback on the support provided by trainers and assessors is very positive.

13. Assessment is satisfactory and meets learners' and employers' needs. Assessment planning is clear and designed to cause minimum disruption to workplace activities. Candidates are able to contact assessors when workplace activities provide an opportunity for assessment and assessors respond positively to these requests. Employers and supervisors provide appropriate witness testimonies, details of learners' prior achievement and photographic evidence to supplement portfolio evidence. Learner progress reviews are inadequate. ETS staff do not visit learners routinely to review progress or to set short-term targets. Other than its training/assessment visits, ETS has no mechanism to monitor progress or to reinforce important information. The absence of learner progress reviews restricts opportunities for discussion on equality of opportunity and most learners have a poor understanding of equality and diversity.
14. Resources for off-the-job training are satisfactory. The training area for gas network operations has good facilities for pipe-laying and trenching. Several items of plant are available at the centre and others are hired when required. ETS provides good quality resources for teaching, including a central database that contains printable learning and assessment materials. Staff use this effectively to develop individual learning packs linked to specific training programmes. ETS has recently developed a very useful external area for the training and assessment of learners working in confined spaces. Classrooms in the training centre are poorly maintained. High volumes of training have delayed plans to refurbish these facilities.
15. The wide range of specialist training provision at ETS meets learners' and employers' needs effectively. Programmes have been designed well to meet the needs of the construction and utilities industries. Close consultation with employers has led to the expansion of its provision. This includes an effective strategy to develop subcontracted training and assessment for companies involved in roofing and fenestration occupations. Following demand from employers, ETS developed a range of internally certificated courses linked to improving health and safety practices and working in confined spaces.
16. Support for learners is satisfactory. The provision of information, advice and guidance for learners is insufficiently developed. Learners are unaware of the purpose of Train to Gain until they have joined the programme and completed their induction. Employers do not always explain the reasons and benefits of training sufficiently to learners. Information and advice on progression is provided at induction and displayed in the training centre. However, ETS does not formally

record or explain opportunities for progression sufficiently to learners during the training programme. Few learners who achieve NVQ level 2 progress to further qualifications. This area for improvement was not identified in the self-assessment report.

Leadership and management

Satisfactory: Grade 3

Equality of opportunity

Contributory grade: Satisfactory: Grade 3

17. Leadership and management are satisfactory. Strategic direction is clearly focused on meeting the needs of the construction and utilities sector. Most staff, including directors, managers, trainers and assessors, have good industrial experience and are very aware of the sector's changing certification and regulatory needs. Strategies to maintain and improve success rates have been very effective. ETS has maintained success rates at high levels since acquiring a Train to Gain contract. Its annual business plan identifies appropriate business objectives to increase turnover, secure new major clients, raise the company profile and win more public sector contracts.
18. ETS has established very good links with employers, as identified in the self-assessment report. Many companies have worked with ETS for many years and much of the training is repeat business. The management of training is good. Training and assessment are planned carefully to meet the needs of employers and learners. Much of the training and all assessment is carried out effectively on-site using learners' day-to-day activities. Learners' prior experience and attainment is considered carefully and appropriately recognised. Assessors are very familiar with site practice and the commercial demands on contractors, and they take great care not to interrupt site production targets. The highly responsive and flexible approach to providing training and certification enables employers to demonstrate a well qualified and safe workforce, increased productivity, improved standards and competitiveness.
19. ETS' approach to equality of opportunity is satisfactory. An appropriate policy is in place. Its annual action plan for 2009 has not yet been produced. ETS has identified that it needs to promote equality of opportunity more effectively. Slinging and signalling training for Polish migrant workers has taken place successfully. Good quality learning and assessment materials have been translated, an interpreter is used to deliver the training and success rates are good. Train to Gain has helped ETS to widen participation. Many of its learners have very few or no previous qualifications and would not access training through conventional means. Female learners and learners from minority ethnic backgrounds are under-represented at ETS, as they are in the sector as a whole. Equality of opportunity is only covered superficially at induction and is not reinforced sufficiently in other parts of the training. Most learners only have a basic understanding of equality and diversity. Procedures for safeguarding

learners meet current government requirements. ETS' arrangements for safeguarding vulnerable adults help minimise risks if concerns are identified.

20. Quality assurance arrangements are incomplete. The use of learners' and employers' feedback, formal monitoring of subcontractors and the observation of key learning processes are not developed fully. This area for improvement is identified in the self-assessment report. Target-setting is insufficiently developed. The only target set during 2008/09 is to increase annual turnover. ETS does not set adequate targets to improve or maintain success rates, recruit learners, or to improve learner and employer satisfaction rates. It does not use targets effectively to maintain or improve learners' progress. Arrangements to support the literacy and numeracy needs of learners are insufficiently developed, although its initial assessment process confirms that many learners would benefit from additional learning support. ETS refers learners to other providers to take Skills for Life qualifications, but few take up the opportunity. Assessors provide sufficient support to enable learners to complete their NVQ. Currently no assessors have basic skills qualifications. These areas for improvement are not identified in the provider's self-assessment report.
21. Management of construction training is satisfactory. Communication is effective but often informal. Managers use and analyse data effectively to contribute to decision making. However, ETS does not carry out analysis of recruitment and achievement of different groups for equality and diversity purposes. Staff training and development is satisfactory, and training in equality of opportunity is to begin shortly. Trainers and assessors have good vocational and assessor qualifications but only one has a teaching qualification. ETS uses staff appraisals to identify training and development needs but does not set targets for improvement or other work activities. Internal verification ensures the consistency of assessment. However, standardisation meetings are not frequent and ETS provides too few opportunities to share good practice. Arrangements for health and safety are satisfactory. Initial risk assessment and the monitoring of health, safety and welfare in the workplace are effective.

What learners like:

- 'Getting trained at work'
- The trainers and assessors are very flexible and approachable
- 'The progress they've enabled me to make'
- The quality of training is very good
- 'Training gave me more confidence to carry out activities on-site'

What learners think could improve:

- 'Too little information from my employer'
- The facilities are a bit cramped and in need of upgrading

Learners' achievements

Success rates on work-based learning Train to Gain NVQ programmes managed by the provider 2006 to 2009

Programme	End Year	Success rate	No. of learners*	provider NVQ rate**
Train to Gain NVQ	2006/07	overall	41	97
		timely	39	95
	2007/08	overall	99	79
		timely	84	68
	2008/09 (6 months)	overall	24	86
		timely	18	75

Note: 2008/09 data is 'part year' only and is representative of the first three months or greater of the LSC contract year

* 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

** NVQ qualification success rates are calculated using data supplied to Ofsted by the provider before inspection