

ITEC North East Ltd.

Inspection report

Unique reference number:	52563
Name of lead inspector:	Colin Ashton HMI
Last day of inspection:	15 October 2009
Type of provider:	Independent learning provider
Address:	Technology Court Bradbury Road Aycliffe Industrial Estate Newton Aycliffe County Durham DL5 6DA
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Information about the provider

1. ITEC North East Ltd (ITEC) is a not-for-profit independent training provider and has registered charitable status. ITEC was established in 1986 and operates from training centres in Newton Aycliffe, Middlesbrough and Gateshead. At the time of the inspection ITEC was in the process of undergoing an organisational restructure.
2. ITEC contracts with the North East Learning and Skills Council (LSC) to deliver a range of apprenticeship programmes, including young apprenticeships, apprenticeships, advanced apprenticeships and adult apprenticeships. ITEC is also part of a local consortium for the delivery of Train to Gain. Just over half of all learners work in business administration, with the remainder in information and communication technology (ICT). ITEC employs 32 full-time and part-time staff. Approximately 58% of learners are male and 3% are from minority ethnic groups.
3. The unemployment rate across County Durham is 8%, above the national rate of 6.2%. In 2007/08, a below average proportion of school leavers achieved five or more GCSE grades A* to C, including English and mathematics across County Durham. The proportion of school leavers not engaged in education, employment or training (NEET) was 10.4% in 2007 compared to the national rate of 8.2%.
4. ITEC North East provides training on behalf of the following provider:
 - Access Training Ltd
5. The following organisation provides training on behalf of ITEC North East:
 - Cablecom Training Ltd

Type of provision	Number of enrolled learners in 2008/09
Employer provision: Apprenticeships	329 apprentices

Summary report

Grades: 1 is outstanding; 2 is good; 3 is satisfactory; 4 is inadequate

Overall effectiveness of provision	Grade 3
Capacity to improve	Grade 3
	Grade
Outcomes for learners	3
Quality of provision	3
Leadership and management	3
Safeguarding	3
Equality and diversity	3
Subject areas	Grade
Information and communications technology	3
Business administration and law	3

Overall effectiveness

6. ITEC's overall effectiveness is satisfactory. The provider has satisfactory capacity to improve. Senior managers and the board of directors provide clear direction to improve performance and the provision for learners. Outcomes for learners, the quality of provision and leadership and management are satisfactory. ITEC works with employers to provide training and work experience that meets the needs of learners and employers well. The provision in both of the subject areas inspected is satisfactory, with learners gaining good vocational skills. Learners achieve qualifications satisfactorily but their progress is often slow and not enough learners complete within the agreed time. Learners feel safe. Arrangements to safeguard learners are satisfactory. ITEC's promotion of equality and diversity is satisfactory.

Main findings

- Outcomes for learners are satisfactory. The proportion of apprentices completing their qualification has increased each year since 2005/06. Fewer learners with a disability or those from minority ethnic groups complete their apprenticeship, although success rates for these groups are improving.

- Too many learners make slow progress, contributing to the low but improving timely success rates.
- Learners enjoy their apprenticeships and are developing a good range of professional and vocational skills required for their work.
- Teaching and learning are satisfactory and individual coaching is very effective in helping learners to develop good vocational skills.
- The provider makes good use of technology such as MP3 players, email, the internet and ITEC's 'e-Campus' intranet to support the assessment process.
- The provision meets the needs of learners and employers well. ITEC works well with a good range of employers and well-chosen partners to achieve good sustainable employment opportunities for young people and adults.
- Assessors use learner progress review meetings well to monitor their progress and agree future actions. However, in too many cases employers are not sufficiently involved.
- ITEC has an active and well informed board of directors. The board monitors performance satisfactorily and sets a clear strategic direction for the company.
- Arrangements for safeguarding learners are satisfactory. Learners feel safe and protected from harassment and bullying. ITEC takes appropriate action to ensure that they are safe both at work and when attending any of ITEC's training centres for off-the-job training.
- The promotion of equality and diversity is satisfactory. Learners and staff receive appropriate training. ITEC tackles discrimination and is narrowing the achievement gap satisfactorily but some groups of learners achieve much more slowly than others.
- ITEC provides satisfactory value for money and has sound strategies for financial planning centred on the quality of provision. It manages an appropriate range of resources well to meet the needs of learners.

What does ITEC NE need to do to improve further?

- Continue the improving trend in overall and timely success rates for all groups of learners by developing, implementing and measuring strategies to support learners whose progress is too slow.
- Evaluate why some groups of learners progress less well than others and implement support processes to improve their outcomes in line with other learners.
- Develop and implement measures to ensure greater awareness and involvement in the assessment and learner review processes to enable employers to better support learners when they are at work.
- Better coordinate provision to ensure all learners have positive outcomes by continuing with the change management programme.

- Continue to develop safeguarding and equality and diversity through training and guidelines to ensure that all staff, employers and learners are confident with them.
- Develop and monitor sound quality systems to further improve provision.

Summary of the views of users as confirmed by inspectors

What learners like:

- the information and help they have from their instructors and training supervisors
- the approachability of ITEC staff
- being able to get first hand experience of new skills as well as a qualification
- the good feedback their tutors give them on their progress
- the very effective support they get from tutors to help them find full-time employment
- the environment and facilities at the Gateshead centre
- developing skills that really challenge and develop them in addition to those they learn within their current job role
- the wide range of qualification options available.

What learners would like to see improved:

- the delays in finding out the results of tests and submitted portfolios
- the delays in finding placements
- the relevance of work given to them at the ITEC training centre
- the too strict atmosphere in the training centre
- the response time to learners' queries from some assessors
- the opportunity to take a higher level course where appropriate.

Summary of the views of employers as confirmed by inspectors

What employers like:

- support in recruiting employees and apprentices
- the professionalism and approachability of training supervisors
- the positive working relationship with ITEC
- the early identification and communication of learner issues by the assessors to the employer
- the progress that learners make
- the range of qualification options available.

What employers would like to see improved:

- better communication about the wider application of training programmes
- co-ordination of work activities with apprenticeship requirements
- the regularity of information they receive about learners' training and progress
- information about expected levels of progress to allow them fuller participation in the learner progress review and training process
- the rigour and precision of targets set for learners
- employer involvement in three-way discussions about learners' progress
- better preparation and information for learners to prepare them for work
- the time it takes for ITEC to respond to queries.

Main inspection report

Capacity to make and sustain improvement

Grade 3

7. ITEC's capacity to make and sustain improvements is satisfactory. ITEC has made steady improvements to success rates since the last inspection, which remain satisfactory overall. Learners develop good skills and have a satisfactory awareness of both health and safety issues and matters relating to equality and diversity. However, quality systems have until recently been insufficiently used to further develop the provision and some areas for improvement from the last inspection remain.
8. ITEC uses self-assessment processes satisfactorily to bring about improvement. Self-assessment identified most of the strengths and some of the areas for improvement found by inspectors. Leaders and managers provide strong direction and clear planning relating to the restructuring of the company and have the support of staff and learners. The provider has a clear vision and appropriate priorities to sustain improvement and raise expectations for both learners and employers. ITEC has a satisfactory record of setting and meeting targets. However, these are not always suitably monitored and used to plan for further improvement. The board appraises ITEC's performance and makes appropriate contributions to improve the provision. ITEC has appropriate staff and resources to secure satisfactory value for money. It has very good arrangements to share resources with partners for the benefit of learners through a well established collective. The company gathers feedback from learners and employers to analyse satisfaction levels and is actively seeking ways to improve the quality of the feedback to make it more useful. The observation of the teaching and learning process does not sufficiently lead to improvements in provision and is being further developed.

Outcomes for learners

Grade 3

9. Overall success rates are satisfactory. Overall success rates for apprentices have improved from 56% in 2005/06 to 73% in 2008/09. Timely success rates have also improved over the same period from 31% to 56% but this is too low when compared to overall rates. Success rates for some groups of learners are low; for example, learners with disabilities and those from minority ethnic groups.
10. Learners in both subject areas enjoy their work and develop good personal, technical and professional skills. These contribute to their economic and social well-being and improve their employability. Some learners in ICT gain good experience working in highly specialised areas. Learners gain confidence, make good progress in their job roles and some have advanced to more responsible jobs with their employers. Learners demonstrate safe working practices and feel safe at work and on ITEC's premises.

The quality of provision

Grade 3

11. Teaching and learning are satisfactory. Individual coaching is very effective in helping learners develop good vocational skills. Individual learning plans are used appropriately to inform the planning of off-the-job training but are not always sufficiently linked to training at work. Most learners have appropriate measurable targets but their progress towards them is not always monitored and recorded in sufficient detail.
12. Assessment is satisfactory. Assessors are aware of the progress of each of their learners and visit them in the workplace approximately every four weeks. However, for some learners, assessments are not planned well and do not take into account employers' views. Assessors do not always adjust the frequency of visits to meet learners' needs and consequently fail to assess higher level skills soon enough.
13. Assessors make good use of email and other technology, such as MP3 players, to support assessment. Assessors give learners useful feedback on how to improve their work. An increasing number of learners are able to benefit from having access to a good range of materials from ITEC's 'eCampus' intranet. Portfolios contain a suitable range of evidence. Internal verification is satisfactory. ITEC has recently carried out a review of the process but the full impact of this has yet to be seen.
14. ITEC makes satisfactory arrangements for the provision of literacy and numeracy support. All learners complete an initial assessment and receive additional support where necessary.
15. ITEC conducts satisfactory progress reviews. Assessors use them well to monitor learners' progress and agree future actions. Learners are aware of the progress they are making and the work they need to do to complete their qualification. However, in a few cases employers are not sufficiently involved in target setting or following their learners' progress. Assessors make good use of visits to the workplace to check that learners are working in a safe environment and are safe from abuse, bullying or harassment.
16. The provision meets the needs of learners and employers well. ITEC is effective at partnership working with a wide range of employers which benefit learners by providing good placement and employment opportunities. Learners and employers have the opportunity to select optional units from the qualification that are most relevant to their work and meet their needs.
17. Care, guidance and support for learners are satisfactory overall. Induction is very effective in helping learners to settle in. Assessors are informative and helpful. They build learners' confidence skilfully and sensitively by helping them to develop appropriate work skills. Learners receive appropriate information, advice and guidance relating to further training and their employment goals. ITEC has effective arrangements in place to identify learners who are at risk of leaving early and takes action to provide additional support to help these

learners remain on programme. These arrangements have recently been revised and now are extended to include those learners whose progress is too slow.

Leadership and management

Grade 3

18. ITEC's leadership and management are satisfactory. Leaders and managers raise expectations and promote ambition throughout the organisation satisfactorily. ITEC has a clear and realistic strategy for planning and developing its learning programmes and services through its planned restructure.
19. ITEC sets and meets satisfactory targets for recruitment but its provision is insufficiently challenging for some learners. Its strategic direction clearly reflects national and local priorities and the provision is very relevant to learners, employers and local communities. ITEC uses data and information satisfactorily to plan the provision but does not evaluate it well enough to inform quality improvement initiatives. ITEC develops resources satisfactorily to support learning.
20. ITEC has an active and well-informed board. The board monitors performance adequately and sets the strategic direction of the company.
21. ITEC safeguards and protects its learners satisfactorily. Staff take adequate action to identify and respond to learners' welfare concerns. ITEC prioritises safeguarding and it has a high profile in the new quality systems. ITEC has revised its safeguarding policy and made good use of external sources, including the local safeguarding board, to guide strategy on safeguarding and to provide staff training. All relevant staff, including the board of directors, have undergone an enhanced Criminal Records Bureau (CRB) check. A central record is maintained by the nominated safeguarding officer.
22. ITEC's approach to equality of opportunity is satisfactory. The provider satisfactorily tackles discrimination and is effective in narrowing the achievement gap. However, in business administration, learners aged 19-24 achieve much more slowly than those aged 16-18. Staff promote equality and diversity satisfactorily, although there is insufficient emphasis on contextualising it to work to make it more meaningful to learners. ITEC assesses the impact of its work in relation to equality and diversity and analyses recruitment data and success rates. It takes action where issues are identified but does not use this information sufficiently to plan improvements. For example, ITEC knows that its disabled learners achieve less well than other groups and that learners from minority ethnic groups, while still underperforming, have improved their performance very effectively. However, it has not sufficiently analysed the reasons for these trends and its subsequent action planning has not been sufficiently precise or fully effective. Staff have adequate training in equality and diversity and many are qualified to level 2. ITEC takes satisfactory measures to protect learners and staff from harassment, bullying and discrimination. It manages complaints satisfactorily. ITEC sets and meets satisfactory targets for the recruitment of under-represented and priority groups.

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23. ITEC has a new learner involvement strategy which is satisfactory. It replaces a former less effective strategy. ITEC gathers feedback from learners and employers and satisfactorily breaks down the results to give an indication of satisfaction with the provision. However, it does not clearly record how it takes action in response to feedback. ITEC plans to involve learners and employers in all aspects of the provision and is putting measures in place to ensure this happens.
 24. The provider works well with a good range of well-chosen partners to achieve sustainable employment opportunities for young people.
 25. Arrangements for quality improvement are satisfactory. ITEC is reviewing its quality systems to ensure improved effectiveness. It did not use its previous systems well enough and did not revise or revisit them frequently enough. It has not sufficiently addressed some of the areas for improvement identified in the last inspection. It is developing its quality systems in order of priority to ensure that there is a direct positive impact on the quality of provision. ITEC's self-assessment report accurately identifies many of the strengths and some of the areas for improvement found by inspectors and its more recent position statement shows that it now regards many of the strengths in the self-assessment report to be normal practice. The self-assessment report grades all aspects of provision higher than the inspection.
 26. ITEC has sound strategies for financial planning centred on the quality of provision. Overall, learners progress, develop skills and knowledge and attain their learning goals satisfactorily in relation to their starting points. The provider gathers feedback about resources but the use of this is being developed further to make it more effective. ITEC manages and uses its resources well to meet the needs of learners. Learners have adequate resources overall and some are very good. ITEC plans the management of its resources to ensure sustainability.

Subject areas

Information and communication technology

Grade 3

Context

27. There are 146 learners working towards National Vocational Qualifications (NVQs) in ICT at levels 2 and 3. Around two thirds are apprentices and the remainder are advanced apprentices. Most learners are employed and the rest are on placement. ITEC conducts most training and assessment in the workplace and the rest in its own training centres.

Key findings

- Overall success rates are satisfactory but improving. Timely success rates are also improving but remain low. Success rates are lower for male learners and for those with a disability or additional learning need.
- Learners enjoy their learning. They develop good personal and professional skills such as learning to set up and maintain virtual servers or to configure security systems. These skills improve their employability in the sector. Some learners have developed sufficient skills and confidence to travel to clients' sites to resolve problems. A few learners are on insufficiently challenging courses.
- Learners feel safe and know how to complain if they need to. They understand and use safe working practices and are aware of their rights and responsibilities.
- Learners developing their skills are making a satisfactory contribution to sustaining local economic capacity by adding to the pool of skilled information technology professionals available.
- Assessors link learning programmes satisfactorily to the results of initial assessment. On-the-job training is interesting and appropriate and inspires and challenges most learners.
- Many learners make good use of online technology such as email to communicate with their assessors. They use MP-3 players and e-portfolios effectively to record evidence.
- Assessment practice is satisfactory. It is fair and consistent but is not always planned and monitored to ensure a good rate of progress. Employers are insufficiently involved in the planning of learning and assessment and opportunities to include some high level work in assessments are sometimes not taken. Short-term action planning is often good, with clear tasks set for learners each month but this good practice is not used by all assessors and some action plans do not contain enough detail. Learners receive clear and constructive feedback from assessments and reviews.
- The provision meets the needs and interests of learners well. Learners can specialise in becoming skilled users of information technology in their work, or in more technical support roles. They learn in real work situations and are able

to progress from level 2 to level 3. Arrangements for assessment and training are flexible and ITEC staff work outside normal office hours where this best meets employers' or learners' needs.

- ITEC has good relations with employers. This gives learners substantial benefits. Many employers provide training and practice in up-to-the minute commercially relevant skills. They provide good support for young learners to develop skills and confidence in dealing with people and to develop a work ethic. ITEC identifies employers' training needs accurately when matching apprentices to their prospective roles. Employers appreciate ITEC's professional approach, its flexibility in delivery and its sensitivity to their organisation's priorities.
- Care, guidance and support are good. Learners receive good individual care and benefit from support that is sensitive to their age, maturity, confidence levels and the amount of work experience they have. Reviews are timely, frequent and supportive and identify concerns well. Assessment processes are appropriate and ITEC staff focus well on learners' knowledge of their rights and responsibilities and the safety of their environment.
- Leadership and management are satisfactory. Managers ensure staff focus on keeping learners on programme and have recently increased their focus on success rates, resulting in modest improvements.
- ITEC promotes the safeguarding of learners satisfactorily. ITEC staff have undergone training and most display a satisfactory understanding of how to respond to any issues that may arise.
- Quality improvement of the provision is satisfactory. Internal verification and the observations of teaching, coaching and learning are systematic and have contributed to the modest improvements seen in success rates. However, some records of observation of teaching and learning lack enough detail to support the grade awarded and where good practice is identified it is not always shared.

What does ITEC North East Ltd need to do to improve further?

- Continue to focus on the improvement of the overall and timely success rates to ensure that all groups of learners achieve at the same rate and make good progress.
- Develop better ways of monitoring learners' progress and review these frequently in order to take early action to address potential under achievement or slow progress.
- Contextualise equality and diversity and safeguarding guidelines and training to ensure a better understanding by learners and employers.
- Improve arrangements for including employers more effectively to allow them to understand the requirements of the apprenticeships better and to contribute more to planning, learning and assessment. Include them more in reviews and assessment.

Business administration and law

Grade 3

Context

28. There are 118 apprentices and 74 advanced apprentices on business administration and law programmes at NVQ levels 2 and 3. Of these 148 are working towards qualifications in business administration and 44 are working towards qualifications in customer service. All learners are employed in Teesside, County Durham and Tyne and Wear. Most training and assessment is carried out in the workplace.

Key findings

- Overall success rates are satisfactory. The overall success rate has risen from 60% in 2005/06 to 72% in 2008/09. Timely success rates are low but improving. They have improved significantly from 28% in 2005/06 to 57% in 2008/09 but there are variations between different age groups. For example, only approximately 50% of learners who are over the age of 19 reach their learning goal in the expected time compared with 62% of 16 to 18 year olds.
- Learners develop good vocational skills which contribute to their value in the workplace. They improve their understanding of working procedures and develop a good range of skills very closely related to their workplace. Learners become much more confident. They enjoy their work, are able to learn and practise a range of administrative and customer service skills and make good progress in their job roles. Some learners have advanced on to more responsible jobs within their organisations.
- Learners pay satisfactory attention to adopting safe working practices. They receive a satisfactory induction in their training centre and in the workplace which includes initial guidance on equality and diversity and information on health, safety and security. They are encouraged to consider the physical safety aspects of their workplace and have a satisfactory awareness of procedures to follow.
- Coaching, training and assessment support learning well. Assessors are knowledgeable and develop learners' understanding of the requirements of the qualification well. Learners receive good support from ITEC staff, through regular reviews and telephone and email contact. Staff are readily available to give extra help when it is needed. Learners' progress is monitored well and they are given appropriate and constructive feedback on how to improve. They also receive effective individual coaching and training at work when required. The standard of work they produce is satisfactory.
- Internal verification is satisfactory. Internal verifiers carry out sufficient final sampling of assessments. In most cases they provide adequate written feedback to the assessors. However, they do not provide a sampling plan and do not routinely ensure that actions arising from their sampling are followed up.
- Progress reviews are satisfactory. They are well planned and ITEC staff set and monitor effective short-term targets which are specific, measurable and

achievable. Learners respond well to this approach. However, many employers are not sufficiently involved in discussions around their learners' work and their progress.

- Information, advice and guidance are satisfactory. Learners at all centres receive satisfactory induction training. They are also provided with information on the key elements of their apprenticeship and how they are going to be assessed during their programme. All learners are assessed effectively on entry to establish their levels of literacy and numeracy.
- Support to improve learners' literacy and numeracy skills is effective. Support is provided by ITEC staff, either on an individual basis in the learners' workplace or through additional classes at the training centres. Most of these sessions are effectively planned and delivered. However, the support provided is not always fully recorded on the learners' individual learning plan or progress reviews
- Programmes meet the needs of learners and employers well. The flexible approach to learner support allows a wide choice of options and support arrangements to meet learners' and employers' needs. Learners can select qualifications and optional units which are specifically relevant to their work role. Some units offered encourage learners to consider their longer term career aspirations.
- ITEC has developed effective working partnerships with employers in Tees Valley, Durham and Tyne and Wear. For several years it has worked effectively with a number of organisations that recruit apprentices on an annual basis. In some cases, employers have as many as six or seven apprentices following programmes with the ITEC.
- Managers are developing strategies for raising levels of learner achievement. They have introduced systems for identifying learners who are at risk of leaving their programme early and, in some cases, those who are not progressing sufficiently with their qualification.
- Arrangements for safeguarding learners are satisfactory. Staff have undergone training and the safeguarding policy is sufficiently comprehensive.

What does ITEC North East Ltd need to do to improve further?

- Further improve the overall and timely success rates for all apprentices and advanced apprentices. More emphasis should be placed on those aged 19-24 years and other under-performing groups of learners.
- Improve arrangements for involving employers so they understand the requirements of the apprenticeships better, thus enabling them to contribute more to planning, learning and assessment. Include them more in reviews and assessment.
- Plan internal verification activity to include adequate interim assessment sampling and ensure that issues arising are adequately followed up and corrective action is taken and recorded.
- Make better use of the learners' individual learning plans to record and plan support and to review learners' progress against these plans.

- Increase the contextualisation of safeguarding and equality and diversity to work during progress reviews.

Information about the inspection

29. Three of Her Majesty's Inspectors (HMI) and three additional inspectors, assisted by the provider's Quality Manager, as nominee, carried out the inspection. Inspectors also took account of the provider's most recent self-assessment report and development plans, comments from the local LSC, the previous inspection report, and data on learners and their achievement over the period since the previous inspection.
30. Inspectors used group and individual interviews, telephone calls and emails. They looked at questionnaires learners and employers had recently completed on behalf of the provider. They also observed learning sessions, assessments and progress reviews. Inspectors collected evidence from programmes in each of the subject areas the provider offers.

Record of Main Findings (RMF)

ITEC North East Ltd.

Learning types: 14 – 16: Young apprenticeships; Diplomas; 16-18 Learner responsive: FE full- and part-time courses, Foundation learning tier, including Entry to Employment; 19+ responsive: FE full- and part-time courses; Employer responsive: Train to Gain, apprenticeships

Grades using the 4 point scale 1: Outstanding; 2: Good; 3: Satisfactory; 4: Inadequate	Overall	Employer responsive
Approximate number of enrolled learners		
Full-time learners	329	329
Overall effectiveness	3	3
Capacity to improve	3	
Outcomes for learners	3	3
How well do learners achieve and enjoy their learning?	3	
How well do learners attain their learning goals?	3	
How well do learners progress?	3	
How well do learners improve their economic and social well-being through learning and development?	2	
How safe do learners feel?	3	
<i>Are learners able to make informed choices about their own health and well being?*</i>	3	
<i>How well do learners make a positive contribution to the community?*</i>	3	
Quality of provision	3	3
How effectively do teaching, training and assessment support learning and development?	3	
How effectively does the provision meet the needs and interests of users?	2	
How well partnerships with schools, employers, community groups and others lead to benefits for learners?	3	
How effective are the care, guidance and support learners receive in helping them to achieve?	3	
Leadership and management	3	3
How effectively do leaders and managers raise expectations and promote ambition throughout the organisation?	3	
<i>How effectively do governors and supervisory bodies provide leadership, direction and challenge?*</i>	3	
How effectively does the provider promote the safeguarding of learners?	3	
How effectively does the provider actively promote equality and diversity, tackle discrimination and narrow the achievement gap?	3	
How effectively does the provider engage with users to support and promote improvement?	3	
How effectively does self-assessment improve the quality of the provision and outcomes for learners?	3	
How efficiently and effectively does the provider use its available resources to secure value for money?	3	

*where applicable to the type of provision

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