

# Economic Solutions Ltd

## Inspection report

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Unique reference number: 53233

Name of lead inspector: Ian McMillan HMI

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Type of provider: Independent learning provider

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## Information about the provider

1. Manchester Solutions (MS) is the trading name of Economic Solutions Ltd (ES) and is a group of companies that includes Skills Solutions and Work Solutions. MS is an independent learning provider based in Manchester. The MS Group employs around 1,200 staff of whom around 170 trainers, assessors, specialist key skills and additional learning support staff and managers work directly to support the delivery of ES programmes. Four of the nine subject areas offered by MS were inspected, including health and social care, engineering and manufacturing technologies, construction, planning and the built environment, and business, administration and law. A network of subcontractors delivers much of the off-the-job training and assessment for apprenticeship and Train to Gain programmes. MS has a significant role in managing and monitoring subcontractor performance.
2. Train to Gain provision has increased significantly since the previous inspection from a quarter to around half of the whole provision. MS recently opened a new skills centre in Trafford Park to train apprentices and adults in construction, automotive and engineering. MS contracts with Greater Manchester Learning and Skills Council (LSC). Government-funded training accounts for approximately 95% of MS's business.
3. At the previous inspection, all MS's overall grades were good except for achievement and standards which were satisfactory. All subject area grades were good except for information and communication technology (ICT) which was inadequate. At MS's reinspection in February 2009, the overall grades were unchanged. The grade awarded for ICT at the reinspection was satisfactory grade 3.
4. MS has expanded its apprenticeship and Train to Gain provision over the last few years. Part of this expansion is due to its response in meeting Government priorities and through the merger of a sibling training provider named Automotive Solutions (trading as Training and Manpower Ltd).
5. In December 2009, the unemployment rate was 7.6% in Greater Manchester, compared with a North West average of 6.9% and a national average of 6.2%. The 2001 census showed that the proportion of people from minority ethnic groups is 8.9% in Greater Manchester, compared with the national average of 9.1%. The proportion of school leavers gaining five or more GCSEs at grade C or above, including maths and English, in Greater Manchester in 2008 was 36.9%, compared with 47.6% in England.

The following organisations provide apprenticeship training on behalf of ES:

- BPP Professional Education
- Hair Razors
- Liverpool Community College
- Trafford College
- Oldham College
- Razors Edge
- Salford College
- South Yorkshire Fire & Rescue Service
- Stockport College of FE
- Tameside College
- The Central Manchester College
- The Manchester College
- Wigan and Leigh College

The following organisation provides Train to Gain training on behalf of ES:

- A+ Skills Training Ltd
- BPP Professional Education
- Buttercups
- Kaplan
- Rotary Test Drilling Ltd
- TKM Security Training Services
- Veritas Safety Ltd

Type of provision	Number of enrolled learners in 2008/09
Provision for young learners: 14 to 16	70 part-time learners
Entry to Employment	430 learners
Employer provision:	
Train to Gain	2,089 learners
Apprenticeships	2,340 apprentices

## Summary report

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

Overall effectiveness of provision	Grade 2
Capacity to improve	Grade 3
	Grade
Outcomes for learners	2
Quality of provision	2
Leadership and management	2
Safeguarding	3
Equality and diversity	3
	Grade
Subject areas	Grade
Health and social care	2
Engineering and manufacturing technologies	2
Construction, planning and the built environment	2
Business, administration and law	2

## Overall effectiveness

6. The overall effectiveness of ES's provision is good. Directors and senior managers have provided effective leadership that has successfully raised expectations and promoted ambition for learners. ES has implemented significant improvements since the previous inspection. Success rates across all programmes have improved and most are good. The quality of teaching and training is good. Partnership working arrangements are outstanding and have significantly influenced regeneration in Greater Manchester. Staff work highly effectively with employers and subcontractors to provide good on-and off-the-job training that meets the needs of learners and employers. Arrangements to assess learners at work are flexible, efficient and well managed. Arrangements to safeguard learners are satisfactory. Learners say they feel safe and protected from abuse. ES is aware of the need to better promote equality and diversity and more closely scrutinise the performance of all learner types. ES is effective in its arrangements to monitor learner progress and the performance of its subcontractors.

## Main findings

- Outcomes for learners are good. The proportion of learners achieving their qualifications is good across all Train to Gain provision and satisfactory and improving across all apprenticeship programmes. Few learners now leave their programmes early without achieving. However, too many learners achieve outside the agreed timescale.
- Progression for apprentices to advanced level programmes is particularly good in engineering motor vehicle, business administration, finance and accounting. Learners previously not in education, employment or training (NEET) on ES's pre-apprenticeship type programmes progress well onto apprenticeship or other further education programmes.
- ES's 14 to 16 year old provision is growing and success rates are good in motor vehicle foundation programmes. Progression rates on Entry to Employment (E2E) programmes are satisfactory with a good proportion of leavers progressing onto apprenticeships or other further education programmes.
- Learners feel safe; health and safety in the workplace are a high priority for staff and employers. Learners develop good employability skills, and in 2008/09, over three quarters of all learners achieved vocational qualifications relevant to their job role.
- Teaching and training are good. Learning is well planned and delivered to allow learners to progress at a pace suited to their need. ES ensures that sessions are productive with teachers using their commercial expertise well, to link theory and practical work. One-to-one coaching sessions are very effective and teachers use questioning techniques well, to gauge and monitor understanding.
- The use of information learning technology (ILT) to support teaching and learning is not well developed. Target setting and action planning in learner progress reviews is not always successful in setting sufficiently specific learning goals.
- ES carefully designs its provision to match the needs of employers and learners. Employers are highly involved in developing programmes. However, learners are not sufficiently involved in developing and improving programmes.
- Partnership working is outstanding. Close collaboration with funding bodies, other training providers, employers, schools, local authorities and community groups is highly effective in developing a broad range of successful programmes across the Greater Manchester area. Feedback from employers and learners is particularly positive.
- Support, care and guidance are good across all programmes. ES's contribution to projects aimed at re-engaging and supporting unemployed adults and learners who are NEET, is very successful.
- Senior managers provide strong leadership in many aspects of ES's work. They work particularly well with a significant range of local and regional priority groups to improve training opportunities for learners. However, strategic targets set by senior managers do not sufficiently link to operational action plans.

- Operational managers at curriculum level are very good at monitoring learner progress and developing effective actions to improve retention and success rates.
- Arrangements to promote equality, diversity and safeguarding are satisfactory. ES has been successful in widening participation, supporting regional regeneration and contributing to social inclusion in the area. However, the current equality and diversity strategy lacks coherence across the organisation and there is insufficient monitoring of the performance of different learner groups.
- The self-assessment process is satisfactory. Quality improvement arrangements are generally effective in promoting improvement and raising achievement levels. However, some features of quality improvement, for example, arrangements to observe teaching and learning and the monitoring of Train to Gain subcontractors, are not fully effective.

### What does ES need to do to improve further?

- Continue to improve apprenticeship success rates and timely success rates across all programmes.
- Improve key aspects of quality improvement, for example, arrangements to observe teaching and learning, Train to Gain subcontractor monitoring and quality improvement planning.
- Improve the effectiveness of learner reviews, for example, ensure that all learner reviews set clear time bound targets for improvement and ensure all actions clearly identify learning goals. Additionally, at reviews ensure that all tutors promote equality and diversity.
- Develop better arrangements to monitor the performance of different learner groups, to reduce the variations in performance across programmes.
- Develop a more coherent equality and diversity strategy across all ES's work.
- Improve arrangements to engage learners more effectively to support and promote improvements.
- Ensure strategic targets are reflected in operational action plans to allow senior managers to better monitor performance.

### Summary of the views of users as confirmed by inspectors

#### What learners like:

- having assessors that are relaxed, well organised and flexible
- being supported by tutors that are very helpful, attentive and friendly
- being treated with respect
- gaining qualifications based on their daily work routine
- the individual support to help them stay on the programme and achieve.

What learners would like to see improved:

- the uninspiring theory teaching in some subjects.

Summary of the views of employers as confirmed by inspectors

What employers like:

- the way construction assessors work with us to achieve the same goal
- the flexibility of ES staff in meeting our needs
- ES's efficient and effective management of our staff training
- the good multi-skills development providing us with a more flexible workforce
- the development of employee problem-solving skills and confidence levels
- the effectiveness of communications.

What employers would like to see improved:

- the information provided about their employees' progress.

## Main inspection report

### Capacity to make and sustain improvement

Grade 3

7. ES's capacity to make and sustain improvements is satisfactory. ES has made good improvements since the previous inspection. In particular, ES has expanded its provision significantly to include an extensive Train to Gain and apprenticeship provision in many areas. ES has also expanded its E2E and pre-apprenticeship provision. Partnerships have developed that strongly support regeneration, social inclusion and widen participation. ES has clear plans at curriculum level that provide an effective framework for improvement. Curriculum managers monitor these plans closely.
8. Managers use self-assessment in a satisfactory manner to improve the quality of provision. They make good use of employer feedback to evaluate, develop and improve provision. Overall success rates have improved for all learners since the previous inspection. Support is tailored to meet individual needs and is effective. Timely success rates across most programmes are low and poor for apprentices. Learners are not sufficiently engaged in the development of programmes or in the self-assessment process.

### Outcomes for learners

Grade 2

9. Train to Gain overall and timely success rates are good at 90% and 63% respectively. Qualification success rates for all apprentices are satisfactory and improving. Current learners are making good progress. No noticeable variation exists in the success rates of different groups of learners. E2E progression is satisfactory. Timely success rates are satisfactory and improving on Train to Gain programmes but low for apprentices.
10. Progression onto higher level programmes is very good in engineering motor vehicle, business accounting and finance programmes and from the pre-apprenticeship provision. Progression to higher level programmes in other areas such as retail is low.
11. Learners achieve a good standard of work. Skills development in care, construction and engineering programmes is good. Learners on business programmes demonstrate good technical knowledge and understanding across a complex range of provision. Many Train to Gain learners show significant improvement in self-confidence and progress onto other programmes often at higher levels, or secure increased responsibility in their job roles.
12. All learners have a good understanding of safe working practices and adopt them in learning and at work. They feel safe and know their rights and responsibilities at work. Most learners increase their confidence and communication skills, including how to make more informed career and other



progression choices. Learners are well motivated, enthusiastic and enjoy their learning. Learners attend well and have good records of timekeeping.

## The quality of provision

## Grade 2

13. Teaching and training are good. Teaching sessions are generally well planned to ensure activities effectively engage learners and allow them to progress at their own pace. Teachers draw on good industrial experience to make lessons interesting and relevant. Question and answer techniques are used well to check learners' understanding. One-to-one coaching sessions are highly effective. Resources for teaching and learning are good overall and excellent for hairdressing, construction and engineering. The use of ILT to support teaching and learning is not well developed. On- and off-the-job training is good and effectively coordinated. Colleges and employers make a good contribution to the training. Young people are able to access E2E training in their communities. This training is highly individualised and provides challenging activities which effectively develop learners' self-confidence.
14. Arrangements for the observation of teaching are not consistent. They have yet to be implemented for progress reviews and subcontracted Train to Gain provision. Some observation records are too descriptive and not sufficiently judgemental. The grades awarded appear high and are not always justified by the evidence. Arrangements to ensure the reliability of observations are in place but are not sufficiently thorough. Assessment is well planned though a minority of assessment plans are insufficiently detailed. A good range of assessment methods is used. Assessors recognise and give credit for the existing skills of Train to Gain learners. Most portfolios contain a wide range of evidence which is carefully cross-referenced. Feedback to learners recognises good work and contains helpful suggestions on how to improve. Internal verification is rigorous and ensures the reliability of assessment. Targets set for learners in reviews are not always specific or timebound. Learners' understanding of equality and diversity is not sufficiently developed during reviews.
15. ES's response to developing a range of programmes that meet the needs and interests of learners and employers is good. Programmes are carefully designed to provide highly relevant training and to support progression opportunities. The range of provision is very wide, covering many subject areas. Alongside the extensive range of apprenticeship options available, ES responds additionally to local needs; for example, through its participation in programmes designed to address the NEET issues in the area and through programmes linked to emerging technologies like renewable energy sources. Pathways into higher education have been developed and are well promoted. ES works with a large number of local schools and is actively involved with 14–19 diploma developments. A particularly successful programme in motor vehicle has enabled over 200 Key Stage 4 school pupils to achieve level 1 qualifications. Train to Gain learners and their employers are highly positive about the benefits of the programme with tangible improvements in self-esteem, motivation, financial performance and safety.

16. Partnership working arrangements are outstanding. ES engages very effectively with a wide spectrum of specific industry sector groups and community and other social partner sectors. These activities support very good programme planning and design. Excellent working relationships with a wide range of employers enable ES to source work placements for vulnerable learners and for redundant apprentices. Very productive working relationships with most Greater Manchester local authorities have enabled ES to add value to local regeneration and provide good employment opportunities for learners. Strong partnership working with Aimhigher has successfully increased the number of apprentices progressing into higher education. Excellent working relationships have been developed with Connexions, the probation service and youth offending teams which have helped ES develop its expertise in providing programmes for vulnerable young people. Strong links are in place with ethnic minority community groups, faith and girls schools, where ES works to challenge gender and racial stereotypes. Good links with a range of charitable organisations like Mind and Remploy help promote the provision to people with learning difficulties and disabilities.
17. Care, guidance and support are good. Arrangements for information, advice and guidance (IAG) are effective and ensure that most learners are recruited on to the right courses. The number of learners leaving training early or transferring onto other programmes has significantly reduced and is low. All learners receive effective initial assessment. Once learning support needs are identified, the support begins promptly. A recently established team provides good support in literacy and numeracy. A wide range of approaches are used to deliver support determined by each learner's individual needs. Careers education and guidance is well established on the E2E and Programme Led Apprenticeship (PLA) programmes. Good personal and academic support is provided to learners which enables most to make good progress. Trainers and assessors are highly skilled in motivating and encouraging learners. E2E learners receive good support during and at the end of their programme from their key worker. Effective support is provided to learners who are in financial hardship and those who have been made redundant. A good proportion of those losing their jobs have been helped to find alternative employment. Learners going through challenging circumstances in their lives receive very good support and advocacy.

## Leadership and management

Grade 2

18. Leadership and management are good. ES has set up strategic objectives that respond well to the local economic agenda and support the regeneration of the Greater Manchester area. Progression routes are available in many programmes to raise the economic aspirations of learners from entry levels to higher education. Learners benefit from access to pre-entry courses on apprenticeships where they can experience work in a particular sector before they commence their chosen career. The operational management of all programmes is good. Tutors and assessors promote high standards of skill development to learners and actively encourage them to achieve well and

progress further. ES carefully manages the process of selecting its subcontractors. Regular monitoring takes place with each subcontractor but targeted actions to improve the quality of the provision are not always recorded.

19. Staff at all levels contribute well to the strategic planning process and the creation of a mission and vision for ES. ES's board of directors is appropriately involved in identifying relevant targets to meet the strategic business plan. However, these targets are not sufficiently aligned to the individual subject area development plans to allow senior managers to monitor their progress.
20. Safeguarding arrangements are satisfactory. ES has extended Criminal Records Bureau (CRB) checks to all staff and takes appropriate action where applicants and existing staff have criminal records. Most staff have received the mandatory training in identifying and dealing with child protection and safety issues. ES has an appropriate policy. Designated safeguarding officers are available at all of the provider's sites. Health and safety arrangements are satisfactory and have been recently improved. Learners have an adequate understanding of aspects of risk and safety. Many aspects of ES's arrangements for safeguarding are new and the company has identified that further embedding is required.
21. Arrangements for equality of opportunity are satisfactory. ES has focused on promoting learning to learners from deprived communities and is highly successful at engaging under-represented learners such as those from minority ethnic groups. ES places a strong emphasis on supporting the more able learners to progress to higher education. Staff have received satisfactory development on equality and diversity. ES tackles discrimination well and in some areas such as E2E there is good exploration of rights and responsibilities. ES's policy is well established and informative. Learners have an adequate understanding of equality and diversity. However, the effectiveness of how tutors explore equality and diversity topics at inductions and reviews varies across the provision.
22. Senior managers are good champions for equality and diversity and place a high priority on inclusiveness. They have used management information to drive improvements, for example, in increasing minority ethnic learner engagement in construction and in increasing participation of people from deprived areas. However, whilst the ES's management information is accessible, it is not used sufficiently well to develop an equality and diversity strategy across the whole provision. ES does not sufficiently focus on performance gaps between different groups of learners.
23. Overall, ES has good engagement with users to support and promote improvement. More specifically, employers and other stakeholders contribute particularly well to the organisation's strategic decisions. Learners' views are effectively gathered and acted upon at sector subject level. However, ES does not fully analyse learner feedback from across the whole provision.

24. ES has introduced a range of effective actions to improve retention rates and to secure better timely success rates. For example, new schemes of work have been introduced in some underperforming areas, learner progress is now closely scrutinised across all areas, initial assessment is thorough and leads to timely support interventions and target setting at assessments is now effective in challenging slow progress. Retention rates and current learner progress are good. However, some aspects of ES's quality improvement arrangements are not well developed. For example, the teaching and learning observation process is insufficiently rigorous to identify areas for improvement. Learner progress reviews are not a feature of the observation process and records of observations are overly descriptive. ES does not carry out sufficient observations of assessment carried out by Train to Gain subcontractors.
25. The self-assessment process is satisfactory but insufficiently evaluative. The report fails to capture meaningful contributions from learners or employers. ES misses the opportunity to use its comprehensive range of information and data to fully judge the effectiveness of its provision and develop a challenging quality improvement plan. Inspectors agreed with the majority of the identified strengths in the report; however, ES was not sufficiently self-critical when highlighting its areas for improvement.
26. ES invests continuously in its resources to maintain its ability to offer training and assessment on demand throughout the year. For example, ES's new skills centre provides a high quality learning and assessment environment for engineering and construction skills training. ES also provides financial support for an initiative that offers outdoor activities to learners on employability programmes. Participating learners reflect positively about how this opportunity has improved their social skills. The provision represents good value for money.

## Subject areas

Health and social care

Grade 2

### Context

27. Currently, 423 learners are working towards a health and social care qualification. Ninety-five learners are on apprenticeship programmes and 328 learners are on Train to Gain programmes ranging from level 2 to level 4. Most training and assessment is in the workplace.

### Key findings

- Overall success rates are good. Apprenticeship success rates have improved over the last three years to 76%. Over the same period Train to Gain success rates have increased to 83%. Timely success rates for both programmes are satisfactory and are above the national average.
- Learner progression rates to higher levels of study are good and encouraged by employers. Forty-five per cent of learners starting intermediate programmes since 2006 have progressed onto advanced programmes. Current learners aspire to advanced levels and some to nurse training or higher education.
- Learners develop good vocational and personal skills. Learners gain confidence as they develop their knowledge and understanding. Employers were keen to inform inspectors that for some learners there is significant improvement in learners' work practices. The standard of learners' work in portfolios is satisfactory overall.
- Learners adopt appropriate safe working practices and feel safe in their workplace. They have a satisfactory understanding of bullying and harassment and know whom to contact if they have any concerns. Promotion of equality and diversity is satisfactory and reinforcement is routine during progress reviews. However, tutor questions around equality and diversity are insufficiently challenging.
- Training is well planned and tailored to learners' personal needs and ambitions. Learning sessions are effective; tutors are flexible and mostly deliver good training on a one-to-one or small group basis at work. Learners enjoy their training and are encouraged to undertake independent learning. Assessors use challenging topics well, to stimulate discussion and maintain learner interest. Learning materials are adapted to meet the specific needs of learners.
- Assessment arrangements are satisfactory. Assessments are well planned, frequent and flexible to meet the shift patterns of learners. Assessors use a range of assessment methods and provide learners with clear feedback on their achievements. However, some assessment plans lack detail and do not give the learner enough information on what they need to do.

- Progress monitoring is effective; assessors have monthly meetings with the sector manager to discuss learner progress and to identify concerns. ES has recently introduced a new more effective progress tracking system. Generally, learner reviews are satisfactory and focus on progress towards qualifications. However, some targets set during reviews are insufficiently specific or measurable.
- ES has very productive relationships with employers. Many employers provide training opportunities and support learners to develop new skills and gain promotion. Employers have a strong commitment to develop learners' skills and knowledge and there are many examples where learners are encouraged to enter nurse training. ES works well with employers to promote careers in health and social care. Qualifications are available to support learners and employers as they gain promotion to more senior positions.
- Initial assessment is satisfactory. All learners complete an assessment of their literacy and numeracy skills. Information, advice and guidance prepare learners well for their learning programme. Learners can choose the most appropriate blend of vocational units relevant to their job role.
- Support and guidance are good. Assessors are flexible and supportive in meeting the challenges faced by learners who work shift patterns and they respond well to assessment at short notice. Personal coaching is good and quickly helps learners understand the requirements of their qualifications.
- Literacy, numeracy and language support is satisfactory. Most learners choose the support provided by their assessor rather than the support available from a specialist tutor.
- The management of health and social care programmes is good. Tutor and assessor performance is closely monitored to focus on improving outcomes, teaching, learning and assessment. Monthly management meetings scrutinise learner progress and initiate individual actions to address any concerns. Employer feedback contributes to programme improvement.
- The self-assessment process is inclusive and broadly accurate. However, the development plan does not include clear measurable actions for improvements.

What does ES need to do to improve further?

- Improve timely success rates across all programmes.
- Ensure that records of assessment and progress reviews are sufficiently detailed to fully inform learners of what activities they need to complete next to progress with their qualifications.
- Further develop learners' understanding of equality and diversity by exploring and challenging relevant topics in more depth during progress reviews.

## Engineering and manufacturing technologies

## Grade 2

### Context

28. Currently, 1,087 learners are working towards qualifications in engineering, manufacturing technologies and transport operations and maintenance. Apprentices account for approximately 65% of all learners. Forty-two per cent of apprentices are advanced. The remaining learners are on levels 2 and 3 Train to Gain programmes. Most learners are employed. ES also provides a level 1 training in transport operations for 14 to 16 year old learners.

### Key findings

- Outcomes for learners are good. Framework success rates are high for advanced apprentices and Train to Gain learners in 2008/09 at 83% and 90% respectively. The success rate for intermediate apprentices in 2008/09 is satisfactory at 59%.
- Progression rates from intermediate to advanced and to higher education for apprentices are very good. Timely success rates are satisfactory for Train to Gain learners but poor for all apprentices.
- The standard of learners' work is good and demonstrates a good knowledge of engineering practices. Learners are confident and work accurately. Employers are very positive about the benefits that learners have brought to their organisation. For example, learners in food manufacturing subjects have been able to take on additional responsibilities.
- Learners on Train to Gain programmes develop good vocational and personal skills that improve their confidence both in the workplace and socially. Some learners have won local and national awards because of their high skill level.
- Learners feel safe and demonstrate a good standard of safe working practices. They are aware of their responsibilities toward health and safety. Tutors discuss and reinforce safety and well-being well throughout learners' qualifications and at progress reviews. Employers' reinforcement of working safely is good.
- Teaching, training and assessment are satisfactory. In both practical and theory lessons tutors are knowledgeable and use their relevant vocational experience and good quality resources, including new workshop and classrooms, to support learning.
- New technology is used to good effect in the workplace; ICT supports learning satisfactorily in classrooms. However, tutors do not always use sufficiently precise or direct questions to check fully learners' understanding and they occasionally miss opportunities to develop independent learning skills.
- Assessment is well planned, regular and flexible to meet the needs of learners. Assessors respond promptly to requests from learners. Learner progress monitoring is good. Reviews are frequent; however; targets set during reviews are insufficiently challenging and fail to encourage learners to make timely progress.

- Programmes are flexible and responsive to the needs of learners and employers. All learners have a well-considered individual learning plan; optional NVQ units and subjects are agreed with all parties to fit in with employers' work schedules and learners' aspirations.
- Partnership working is good. Communication with employers, colleges and schools is good and some employers are involved in the planning and development of programmes.
- Good individual support is a key factor in the high levels of learner satisfaction. The identification of and provision for additional support needs is prompt and quickly provided. Learners facing redundancy receive very good support to gain alternative employment and complete their apprenticeships.
- Leadership and management are good. Care is taken to select subcontractors who provide high quality training. ES managers and assessors meet regularly with all subcontracting colleges to discuss learners' progress and agree actions to resolve any issues that arise.
- Recent actions are starting to resolve ES's poor timely success rates. For example, interventions are in place for all learners who are falling behind their planned completion date. Current learners are making good progress. Some aspects of the self-assessment report are not sufficiently evaluative, particularly in identifying how success rates and the quality of training can be improved further.

#### What does ES need to do to improve further?

- Improve timely success rates across all programmes.
- Develop more challenging targets for individual learners during reviews, which are specific, time bound and linked to learning plans. Measure progress and challenge any shortcomings fully during all subsequent reviews.
- Make better use of learner contributions in lessons. For example, ensure that tutors fully acknowledge and account for learners' comments and make better use of these opportunities to gauge understanding and support learning.



## Construction, planning and the built environment

Grade 2

### Context

29. Currently 989 learners are working towards qualifications in construction. Apprentices account for 380 learners; the remaining learners are on Train to Gain or PLA programmes. ES works with local colleges, and specialist private training providers in plant operations and scaffolding help support the delivery of the programmes

### Key findings

- Outcomes for learners are good. The completion rate for learners on Train to Gain programmes is high. Around three-quarters of all apprentices complete their programme successfully. The proportion of learners who complete within the agreed time has improved over the last three years and is now satisfactory. Progression from intermediate to advanced levels is low.
- Learners develop excellent practical skills, are well motivated and enjoy their learning experiences. For example, gas service apprentices effectively link lessons on complex pipe sizing calculations to their experiences of installing gas piping at work. Skills developed promote and support economic well-being.
- Learners on Train to Gain maintenance operations programmes develop particularly good work skills, which employers and customers value. Learners on PLA programmes acquire good employability skills and progress well into other programmes.
- Learners feel safe and demonstrate good safe working practices. They have a good understanding of health and safety procedures at work. Rigorous promotion of health and safety is a feature throughout the programme.
- Teaching and training are good. Tutors are knowledgeable and have relevant vocational experience. Tutors use a good variety of learning resources and activities including ILT to support learning and motivate learners. However, in some lessons, learning aims and objectives were not explained to learners.
- Assessment is well planned, regular and flexible to meet the needs of learners. Pre-assessment briefings to learners are clear and supportive. Assessors respond promptly to requests from learners. However, tutors give insufficient attention to improving learners' written work, particularly spelling and punctuation.
- Learner progress is closely monitored. In most cases, actions required to achieve qualifications are well planned and effective. Reviews are frequent; however, targets set at reviews are not always clear or sufficiently specific.
- Programmes are flexible and responsive to meet the needs of learners and employers. All learners have a well-considered individual learning plan with a good range of specialist training in areas such as gas, plant operations and scaffolding. Key skills are an integrated feature of learners' programmes.

- Outstanding partnerships are in place with construction employers. ES works closely with employers to ensure that programmes prepare learners effectively for the workplace and that qualifications meet current industry requirements.
- Communication with employers is exceptional; they are involved fully in planning and developing programmes for learners. Local employers are all positive about their relationship with staff and managers from ES.
- Good support for learners is a key factor in the improving levels of learners' success. The responsiveness of ES's training staff is highly appreciated by learners, in particular, the personalised support given. The identification of and provision for additional support needs is prompt.
- Managers and staff are committed to continuous improvement. Teamwork is effective and ES has good arrangements to monitor the performance of the subcontractors who support the apprenticeship programmes. Tutors have clear targets that link closely to learners' progress and achievements. Managers closely monitor staff performance against their targets.
- Aspects of the self-assessment report are not sufficiently evaluative, particularly in identifying how the quality of teaching, training and timely success rates can be improved further. Arrangements to monitor Train to Gain subcontractors are not well-established.
- Resources are excellent; they effectively support learning and assessment. Specialist resources at subcontractors for scaffolding and plant operations are particularly good. The provision represents good value for money.

What does ES need to do to improve further?

- Improve timely success rates across all programmes.
- Develop learner progress reviews to ensure that clear targets are set which are specific and measurable.
- Improve the self-assessment report and quality improvement plan to be more self-critical and clearly identify actions for improving teaching, learning and timely success rates.

## Business, administration and law

Grade 2

### Context

30. Currently 1,146 learners are working towards qualifications in business, accounting and finance, marketing and sales. Approximately half of all learners are apprentices who are working mainly towards qualifications in accounting and finance. All other learners are on Train to Gain programmes mainly working towards qualifications in administration, business management, marketing and sales.

### Key findings

- Outcomes for learners are good. Success rates on ES's advanced apprenticeships are good. Success rates across other apprenticeship programmes have remained satisfactory but static over the last few years. Train to Gain success rates are high. Timely success rates across most programmes are poor. Retention and progress of current learners are very good.
- Learners have high aspirations and they enjoy their programmes. The standard of learners' work is high and demonstrates a good knowledge of business. Learners make good progress in improving their economic well-being. Some learners progress into higher education, some secure promotions within their companies and others gain professional status within the banking and finance sectors.
- Employers are very positive about the added benefits that trainees have brought to their organisation. For example, learners develop good skills in report writing, managing people and change, and in producing insurance quotations for corporate risk. They produce and interpret management accounts well and minimise waste, making significant cost savings and improving health and safety in their workplace.
- Learners feel safe. They know who they should contact if they have health and safety or safeguarding issues. The impact of internet safety in the workplace and in personal life is highlighted effectively in lessons. Learners receive good support in making informed choices about their own health and well-being.
- Initial advice and course guidance are effective in ensuring learners are on the most appropriate programme. Learner retention has improved and few learners transfer between programmes.
- Teaching, training and assessment are good. Tutors are knowledgeable and have good relevant vocational experience. Learners participate well in teaching workshops, which support the development of knowledge and understanding effectively. Learning resources and accommodation are good. Assessments are rigorous and well planned to suit employer and learner needs.
- The monitoring of learner progress is good. Reviews are frequent; learners are set clear targets and deadlines. However, there is insufficient promotion and

analysis of learner responses to questions about equality and diversity asked at progress reviews.

- Partnership working is good. Communication with employers is particularly effective in developing a complex and often very specialised range of training programmes. Programmes are flexible and highly responsive in meeting learner and employer needs. ES works well with employers to provide good assessment opportunities.
- ES provides good care, guidance and support for all learners. The identification of and provision for additional and specialist support is prompt. For example, a learner with limited hearing received specialist individual support to support them in accessing an accountancy apprenticeship. Extra coaching sessions are arranged when needed.
- Managers and staff are committed to continuous improvement. Effective actions are in place to improve timely success rates; the progress of current learners is good. Teamwork is good and tutors have clear targets that link closely to learners' progress and achievements. Self-assessment arrangements are satisfactory.

What does ES need to do to improve further?

- Improve timely success rates across all programmes.
- Extend the discussions on equality and diversity topics to develop learner knowledge and understanding further.

## Information about the inspection

Three of Her Majesty's Inspectors (HMI) and eight additional inspectors, assisted by the provider's sector director 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, reports from the inspectorate's quality monitoring inspection, and data on learners and their achievement over the period since the previous inspection.

Inspectors used group and individual interviews, telephone calls and emails. They looked at feedback from learners and employers. They also observed learning sessions, assessments and progress reviews. Inspectors collected evidence from programmes in four of the subject areas the provider offers.

Record of Main Findings (RMF)			
Provider Name:	Economic Solutions Ltd	Inspection No	343077
Learning types: 14to16: Young apprenticeships; Diplomas; 16to18 Learner responsive: FE full-time and part-time courses, Foundation learning tier, including E2E); 19+ responsive: FE full- and part-time courses; Employer responsive: Train to Gain, apprenticeships Blank Column: insert DWP employability programmes (including Workstep), or Judicial Services or nextstep as appropriate			

Grades using the 4 point scale 1: Outstanding; 2: Good; 3: Satisfactory; 4: Inadequate	Overall	14-16	16-18 Learner responsive	19+ Learner responsive	Employer responsive	
Approximate number of enrolled learners at the time of inspection	430		430			
Full-time learners						
Part-time learners	4499	70	67		4362	
Overall effectiveness	2	2	2		2	
Capacity to improve	3					
<b>A. Outcomes for learners</b>						
A. Outcomes for learners	2	2	2		2	
A1. How well do learners achieve and enjoy their learning?	2					
A1.a) How well do learners attain their learning goals?	2					
A1.b) How well do learners progress?	2					
A2. How well do learners improve their economic and social well-being through learning and development?	2					
A3. How safe do learners feel?	2					
A4. <i>Are learners able to make informed choices about their own health and well being?*</i>	2					
A5. <i>How well do learners make a positive contribution to the community?*</i>	3					
<b>B. Quality of provision</b>						
B. Quality of provision	2	2	2		2	
B1. How effectively do teaching, training and assessment support learning and development?	2					
B2. How effectively does the provision meet the needs and interests of users?	2					
B3. How well do partnerships with schools, employers, community groups and others lead to benefits for learners?	1					
B4. How effective are the care, guidance and support learners receive in helping them to achieve?	2					
<b>C. Leadership and management</b>						
C. Leadership and management	2	2	2		2	
C1. How effectively do leaders and managers raise expectations and promote ambition throughout the organisation?	2					
C2. <i>How effectively do governors and supervisory bodies provide leadership, direction and challenge?*</i>	N/a					
C3. How effectively does the provider promote the safeguarding of learners?	3					
C4. How effectively does the provider actively promote equality and diversity, tackle discrimination and narrow the achievement gap?	3					
C5. How effectively does the provider engage with users to support and promote improvement?	2					
C6. How effectively does self-assessment improve the quality of the provision and outcomes for learners?	3					
C7. How efficiently and effectively does the provider use its available resources to secure value for money?	2					

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