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Mrs C Allison  
Managing Director  
The Training and Learning Company  
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Swansea Vale  
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Dear Mrs Allison

Ofsted 2009-10 survey inspection programme: good practice in apprenticeship training

Thank you for your hospitality and cooperation, and that of your staff, during my visit on 26 November 2009 and subsequent telephone interviews to look at good practice in retail apprenticeship training.

The visit provided valuable information that will contribute to our national evaluation and reporting. Published reports are likely to list the names of the contributing institutions but individual institutions will not be identified in the main text without their consent.

The evidence used to inform the judgements included discussions with key members of staff, learners and key partners and examination of documentation.

Features of good practice

- The careful recruitment and training of assessors to specifically match employers' needs.

The Training and Learning Company (TLC) takes great care in the recruitment of its assessors. Before advertising positions, the directors visit each employer site to gain an informed view of the expectations and standards of the learners and their managers. This helps TLC to create an assessor profile that matches the employer's own people specifications. Interviews are then conducted with this profile in mind. For example, an American assessor is posted at a US bank in the City of London and an assessor with 30 years of airline personnel experience is based at Heathrow Airport's Terminal 5. All new assessors to the business, whether qualified or not, participate in a one-week induction programme. These are usually residential and involve small groups of new staff. Assessors learn the 'TLC way' of managing learners and employers. During their induction, each assessor is introduced to the

employer they will be working with and visits their sites. TLC assessors are quickly absorbed into the customer's culture and working practices. Employers report high levels of satisfaction with their assessors and quickly build good working relationships with them.

- The outstanding use of work-based assessors to drive learners' progress and achievement.

TLC assessors are permanently based at an employer's premises for the duration of each contract. The assessor's attention is firmly focused on the needs of the learners in the context of each employer. They are not distracted by the demands of other employers and do not waste time travelling from site to site. By being at one location, assessors and learners benefit from excellent assessment and teaching opportunities. Assessors are able to optimise the use of observation and witness testimony, especially when unexpected work demands arise for learners. They are also well placed to manage learners on different shift patterns. The result is fast achievement for learners and apprentices can expect to complete their full frameworks within three to six months.

- The highly effective use of management information to monitor learners' progress and staff performance.

TLC has developed their own highly effective management information system over the past six years. Extensive data reports are produced at least weekly to ensure each member of staff is meeting their individual and team targets, and that Learning and Skills Council (LSC) funding commitments are being fulfilled. The progress details of each learner are updated daily and checked thoroughly through the internal verification process. Learners have a good understanding of their own achievements and targets. Assessors use the data well to motivate learners and to keep them on track to complete their apprenticeship frameworks.

- The excellent quality assurance reporting arrangements that are specific to each employer.

TLC has a highly effective quality improvement strategy. In particular, it analyses performance by each employer location and reports directly back to the employer on the findings. The managing director produces a monthly quality report for each employer and presents this during contract review meetings. Data are obtained by using feedback from learners, supervisors and assessors, by observing all aspects of the key learning processes and by statistical analysis of learners' progress and achievement. Targets are agreed in advance with each employer, which are managed very closely. When TLC has finished at each site, the directors produce a version of a self-assessment report to close off the project and to identify areas of improvement. Employers are very well informed about performance and quality issues. They express high levels of satisfaction in relation to their involvement in raising the standard of training and assessment.

## Areas for development

No key areas for development were identified during the visit.

I hope these observations are useful as you continue to develop apprenticeship training in your organisation.

As I explained previously, a copy of this letter will be sent to your local LSC and will be published on the Ofsted website. It will also be available to the team for your next institutional inspection.

Yours sincerely

Kevin Culver  
Additional Inspector