

# M.E.A.T. (Ipswich) Limited

Inspection report

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Unique reference number: 53290

Name of lead inspector: Joy Montgomery HMI

Last day of inspection: 2 July 2010

Type of provider: Independent learning provider

Address: Prospect House  
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## Information about the provider

1. Meat East Anglia Trades (Ipswich) Limited (MEAT) is a specialist independent training provider to the meat and poultry industry. The company is based in Ipswich and was founded in 1988. It expanded from being a regional provider to being a national provider in 2004. Apprenticeships in food manufacture are funded by the Skills Funding Agency. MEAT is a member of the Eastern Training Partnership, a consortium for Train to Gain provision in Suffolk. This contract is managed by WS Training. MEAT provides a range of commercial training in butchery, food safety and health and safety.
2. The company is owned and run by the managing director and employs eleven staff, six are involved in training and assessing learners. Most of the training and assessment takes place in the learners' workplace and is supported by distance learning materials. Advanced apprentices attend blocks of training at the Ipswich training centre. At the time of the inspection there were 94 apprentices, 19 advanced apprentices and 19 Train to Gain learners. Almost all learners work in retail butchers or farm shops.
3. Suffolk is generally perceived to be a prosperous county but there are areas of high deprivation in parts of Ipswich and in the north of the county. 90% of the population is White British. Unemployment in 2008/09 was below the average for the East of England, at 5%, and below the national average of 7.4%. In 2008/09, the proportion of pupils in Suffolk achieving five or more GCSEs at grade A\* to C including English and mathematics was 48.7%% compared with the national average of 51%.
4. MEAT provides training on behalf of the following provider:
  - Eastern Training Partnership

Type of provision	Number of enrolled learners in 2008/09
Employer provision:	
Train to Gain	35 learners
Apprenticeships	190 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	2
Leadership and management	2
Safeguarding	3
Equality and diversity	2
Subject Areas	Grade
Manufacturing Technologies	2

## Overall effectiveness

- The overall effectiveness of MEAT's provision is satisfactory. The company has satisfactory capacity to improve and provides good training with satisfactory outcomes. Provision in the specialist area of butchery is good. Learners develop good technical skills as well as customer service related skills. Food hygiene and safe working practices are given a high priority. Employers provide high quality workplaces where most of the learning takes place. Training and the acquisition of technical knowledge is delivered through specially designed workbooks. Trainers and assessors provide good regular support to learners as they progress through the programme. Fortnightly telephone calls are made to check learners' progress and well-being. MEAT has a very good understanding of the training needs of retail butchers and farm shops. Programmes are carefully designed to meet employers' and learners' needs. Leadership and management are good and staff are committed to developing skills and businesses in the meat industry. Equality and diversity are promoted well and the minority of female butchers achieve as well and often better than male butchers. MEAT make regular improvements to the programmes however, these changes do not always improve outcomes for learners as much as managers expect.

## Main findings

- Overall success rates for apprentices have been above the manufacturing national averages for the last three years. In the last 18 months, there has been a slight decline with the introduction of the new apprenticeship framework. Overall success rates for advanced apprentices are currently low.
- Too many learners on Train to Gain programmes take longer than planned to complete their qualifications and success rates are below the national averages. Many learners who leave the programme early do so to find employment in other industries.
- Learners develop good customer service skills as well as technical butchery skills. Many are able to make a positive contribution to the businesses in which they work and often take on additional responsibilities as they become more confident. More learners than before are progressing to higher level qualifications.
- Learners feel safe in their workplaces. They demonstrate good working practices in relation to health and safety as well as food hygiene. MEAT's arrangements for safeguarding learners are satisfactory and employers have appropriate risk assessments in place to protect young people.
- MEAT has developed high quality, well-illustrated specialist workbooks to support learners and to develop their technical butchery knowledge. Employers also find the workbooks informative and useful in supporting the practical training they provide.
- Learners have a clear understanding of what they need to do between visits from assessors and what they have achieved. However, learners are sometimes unsure of how and when they will complete all parts of the programme or what they need to do to influence their rate of progress.
- Programmes are managed in a flexible manner which meets the needs of the learners particularly well. Assessors' visits are regular and on days and times to suit employers. They are sensitive to individuals needs by planning training sessions on site and spending additional time with learners so they can finish more quickly or catch up after periods of absence.
- In addition to training employers' staff, MEAT provides a high level of specialist support and expertise to new and existing retail butchery businesses and farm shops. MEAT works effectively in partnership with employers and other organisations to champion the needs of the sector with government and industry bodies.
- Learners benefit from a wide range of good personal support. In addition to the effective and regular contact with assessors, learners are telephoned every two weeks to check on their general welfare and answer any questions they may have about the work they have been set. Employers are very supportive and adjust working times and conditions for those who take time off due to illness or injury.
- MEAT is committed to the development and training of people in the meat industries throughout England. They are enthusiastic and take great pride in

their work. Staff are well qualified and have a broad range of experiences in the sector. Programmes provide good value for money through careful management of resources across a large number of widely dispersed micro, small and medium sized businesses.

- Managers regularly monitor a range of management information and data on the performance of different groups of learners. However, the information on learners' progress is not used well by managers to ensure they can quickly and easily identify learners who are likely to take longer than expected or may leave early.
- MEAT promotes equality of opportunity well. A thought provoking session on equality and diversity is delivered to advanced apprentices when they attend training in Ipswich. All learners complete a specially designed workbook which is linked to a DVD. Learners' welfare and well-being is checked through regular phone calls.
- MEAT responds promptly and appropriately to any concerns raised and takes effective action to rectify problems. A range of systems is in place to gather the views of learners and employers. However, comparisons are not always made to determine whether the high levels of satisfaction are being consistently maintained over time.
- Managers and staff have a clear understanding of the strengths and areas for improvement for the business. However actions planned as a result of self-assessment are not reviewed on a sufficiently regular basis to evaluate the impact on learners' success rates and to decide whether they have achieved the objectives expected.

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

- Improve success rates by ensuring learners and assessors understand how they can influence the rate at which they progress to ensure they complete within the planned time scales.
- Develop and implement a management system that quickly highlights learners who are making slow progress between visits or who are at risk of leaving the programme early.
- Continue to develop the analysis and use of management information to understand trends in performance over time.
- Ensure actions that are planned to improve the provision are more regularly reviewed and evaluated to ensure they have the impact required.

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

#### What learners like:

- the help and support provided by assessors during visits to the workplace and the fortnightly phone calls
- learning while in the workplace rather than being in a classroom

- the way the training relates to the job
- working on different animal carcasses and learning about the muscle groups
- the opportunity to progress to higher level qualifications and develop a career in butchery
- the workbooks which are full of useful information
- that MEAT ask us for our opinions and make us part of the process
- being able to learn more by being on the programme than they had learnt by just doing the job.

What learners would like to see improved:

- the way in which some of the questions in the workbooks are phrased
- the opportunity to sit more exams in one go
- more time away from the workplace to meet other apprentices and develop new skills.

Summary of the views of employers as confirmed by inspectors

What employers like:

- the service provided to small retail outlets
- that the assessors ensure we are fully involved in the process and kept informed about the learners' progress
- that the targets set for learners to achieve between visits are adjusted to fit with the pressures of their work
- the knowledge that MEAT assessors have and the way they share this with learners
- the way staff have responded to the training and high standards they now achieve.

What employers would like to see improved:

- training sessions away from the workplace where learners can meet each other and study topics in more depth.

## Main inspection report

### Capacity to make and sustain improvement

Grade 3

6. After the previous inspection in 2005, MEAT implemented a range of improvements to maintain the good standards in the quality of provision. Workbooks were redesigned and new ones introduced to support the development on learners' key skills. New tracking sheets and review documents ensure learners are aware of their progress. An 'at risk' system has been developed to assist in the identification of learners who may not complete within the expected time. Training for staff has improved their confidence in supporting learners' development of literacy and numeracy skills. Although the success rates for apprentices are still above national averages, the high success rates achieved in 2006/07 have not been maintained. Actions taken to improve success rates for advanced apprentices have had limited success.
7. The self-assessment is inclusive and evaluative although some of the proposed grades are over stated. The self-assessment correctly identifies the majority of areas for improvement identified during inspection. Quality improvement planning is not sufficiently robust. Proposed developments form part of a three year business plan and are not routinely reviewed. A few of the targets set are not very ambitious.

### Outcomes for learners

Grade 3

8. Overall success rates for apprentices in the last three years has exceeded the national averages by between five and ten percentage points. However, the introduction of a new food manufacture framework has led to a slight decline and the success rate for apprentices is 74% for the first 9 months of 2009/10. The number of apprentices who complete their training within the planned time has decreased and timely success rates are now below national averages. Overall success rates for advanced apprentices in 2008/09 were 6% below the manufacturing national average. Success rates for Train to Gain learners are below national average and too many learners complete their training beyond the planned completion date.
9. Learners develop good sector specific skills. They find the programme challenging but rewarding, particularly aspects such as knife skills, butchery processes and product development. Most learners make good progress and develop vocationally relevant literacy and numeracy skills. The programmes have a positive impact on developing learners' confidence and their personal skills. Many learners gain promotion or increase responsibilities at work. Employers acknowledge the contribution that advanced apprentices make to the development of their business. An increasing number of apprentices are progressing onto advanced apprenticeship programmes.

10. Learners feel safe and secure at work and at the training centre. Learners adhere to safe and good working practices in all butchery operations. Employers understand their obligations to the health and well-being of learners. Workplaces are of a good operating standard with safe working practices in place and food hygiene as a high priority. Learners who attend the Ipswich training centre are briefed on how to protect personal information when using the internet.

## The quality of provision

Grade 2

11. Training, learning and assessment are good. Learners improve their technical knowledge and skills through the effective use of well-designed workbooks. They are well supported by assessors who have good knowledge and industry experience which is valued by both learners and employers. Learners' literacy is reviewed through the completion of the workbooks and additional support provided when required. Assessment of learners' work is well planned, managed and involves employers. Opportunities are sometimes missed to identify and record the full range of activities undertaken by learners in their workplaces. Reviews of learners' progress are thorough and involve employers. Learners understand what they have achieved and what they need to do before the next visit. However, some learners are unsure what they need to do to complete their programme within the expected time set.
12. Programmes fully meet the needs of learners and employers. They are managed in a flexible manner with visits planned to fit in with employers' requirements. Optional units are carefully selected based on the type of workplace and employers' and learners' needs. Consideration is also given to the long term employment prospects of the learner. MEAT's partnership with employers extends to providing a wide range of business advice and guidance to new and existing retail butchers and farm shops. Employers value highly this level of ongoing effective support.
13. MEAT works very effectively with partners including employers, other providers, Ipswich schools, Suffolk County Council and sector skills bodies to meet the needs of young people and the retail butchery industry. MEAT provides a high level of support to the meat industries and is continually involved in advising industry bodies. Managers are actively involved with a range of local projects and strategic development groups.
14. Support for learners is good. Initial advice and guidance for learners is good. MEAT ensures learners have clear expectations of the programmes and know how to succeed. Learners are made aware of professional development opportunities during their programme. In addition to frequent and effective visits to the workplace, learners are telephoned every two weeks to answer any questions they may have about their work and to check on their general health and well being. A list of varied topics is used effectively to ensure the telephone calls are focused and effective.



## Leadership and management

Grade 2

15. The managing director provides strong leadership and a clear focus on providing high quality training to the retail butchery sector. Staff have a broad range of expertise in meat industries and take great pride in their work. They are well supported and encouraged to continually develop their skills and knowledge. Communications and team working are good.
16. Managers regularly monitor a range of management information on the performance of different groups of learners, although success rates measures are not routinely calculated for Train to Gain learners. The reasons for learners leaving the programme early are carefully reviewed to identify any emerging trends and where possible action is taken to address underlying issues. Information on learners' progress is not used sufficiently well by managers to ensure they can quickly and easily identify learners who are likely to take longer than expected.
17. Safeguarding arrangements are satisfactory. Several policies cover the well-being of learners. Four members of staff have completed a level 1 course on safeguarding young people and other staff have been briefed through team meetings. The general manager is the designated person for safeguarding arrangements. However, learners, employers and some staff are not aware of this person's role. Criminal Records Bureau checks have been completed on all staff and the company is aware of the requirement of the Independent Safeguarding Authority vetting and barring scheme.
18. Health and safety checks on employers are thorough and appropriate risk assessments are in place to ensure young people are prohibited from working without supervision in specific areas or on specialist machinery. Regular re-enforcement of health and safety takes place at learners' reviews and forms part of the fortnightly phone calls to check learners' well-being. MEAT liaises with employers and parents when appropriate. Only learners over the age of 18 attend blocks of training in Ipswich and their overnight accommodation is checked.
19. The promotion of equality and diversity is good. All learners complete a well-designed equality and diversity workbook linked with a DVD. Advanced apprentices partake in a thought provoking session when they attend training in Ipswich. Learners' reviews and tutorials are used to reinforce awareness of equal opportunities although the approach is sometimes mechanistic rather than exploratory. The general manager takes the lead on equality and diversity matters and is updating the company policies and training materials to reflect the single equality act. The complaints systems is effective and MEAT respond appropriately to any concerns raised and take effective action to rectify problems.

20. MEAT are successful in increasing the number of qualified female butchers. On Train to Gain programmes the proportion of females is high at 32%. On apprenticeship programmes the proportion of females is similar to the industry average at 7%. Female learners are often more likely to complete compared to males. Staff represent diverse groups and include a high proportion of female butchers.
21. MEAT values the feedback they receive from employers and learners. Employers and learners respond well when asked for their feedback through regular visits, telephone calls and questionnaires. Meetings are held with advanced apprentices when they attend block training and MEAT respond well to their suggestions and feedback. Satisfaction levels are regularly summarised but comparisons are not made to determine whether the high levels of satisfaction are being consistently maintained over time.
22. Managers and staff have a clear understanding of the strengths and areas for improvement for the business and all were involved in discussions to produce the self-assessment report. The resulting improvement plans form part of an overall business plan. However, this is not reviewed on a sufficiently regular basis to decide whether they have achieved the objectives expected. Most actions to improve provision are identified and discussed during staff meetings. These are not evaluated sufficiently well to ensure they have a positive impact on learners' success rates.
23. MEAT provides good value for money. The resources are well-managed and have a focus on sustainability. Assessors' travel is carefully planned to maximise the time they spend with geographically dispersed employers. Learners and employers benefit from being able to work with skilled and knowledgeable staff.

## Information about the inspection

24. One of Her Majesty's Inspectors (HMI) and two additional inspectors, assisted by the provider's managing 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 Skills Funding Agency, the previous inspection report, and data on learners and their achievement over the period since the previous inspection.
25. Inspectors used visits to the workplaces, individual interviews, telephone calls and emails. They looked at questionnaires learners and employers had recently completed on behalf of the provider. They also observed assessments and progress reviews and reviewed a range of documentary evidence.

**Record of Main Findings (RMF)**  
**M.E.A.T (Ipswich) 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	132	132
Part-time learners	0	0
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?	2	
How well do learners improve their economic and social well-being through learning and development?	2	
How safe do learners feel?	2	
Are learners able to make informed choices about their own health and well being?*	n/a	
How well do learners make a positive contribution to the community?*	n/a	
Quality of provision	2	2
How effectively do teaching, training and assessment support learning and development?	2	
How effectively does the provision meet the needs and interests of users?	1	
How well partnerships with schools, employers, community groups and others lead to benefits for learners?	2	
How effective are the care, guidance and support learners receive in helping them to achieve?	2	
Leadership and management	2	2
How effectively do leaders and managers raise expectations and promote ambition throughout the organisation?	2	
How effectively do governors and supervisory bodies provide leadership, direction and challenge?*	n/a	
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?	2	
How effectively does the provider engage with users to support and promote improvement?	2	
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?	2	

\*where applicable to the type of provision

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