

Inter Training Services Limited

Inspection report

Unique reference number: 52489

Name of lead inspector: Janet Rodgers HMI

Last day of inspection: 9 July 2010

Type of provider: Independent learning provider

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Information about the provider

1. Inter Training Services Limited (ITS) is a private limited company established in 1996. The head office is in Horndean, near Portsmouth. ITS specialises in delivering training and assessment to learners working in hairdressing salons mainly across Surrey, Berkshire and Hampshire. ITS has a managing director and executive director, supported by two managers, two curriculum coordinators and a delivery team of eight trainer assessors, six of whom are also internal verifiers. Additionally, there are 36 qualified in-salon assessors who work in 26 of the salons that have ITS learners. ITS has 74 apprentices and 15 advanced apprentices funded by the Skills Funding Agency. Twenty-nine young people aged 14 to 16 are on an Increased Flexibility Programme with ITS, but this ends in July 2010 and is not anticipated to be renewed. All learners are taking National Vocational Qualifications (NVQs) in hairdressing. Approximately 60% of ITS learners receive additional learning and/or social support. ITS has a small amount of commercial activity for privately funded adult learners in hairdressing, health and safety, and assessor awards.

Type of provision	Number of enrolled learners in 2008/09
Provision for young learners: 14 to 16	45 part-time learners
Employer provision: Apprenticeships	114 apprentices

Summary report

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

Overall effectiveness of provision	Grade 4
Capacity to improve	Grade 3
	Grade
Outcomes for learners	4
Quality of provision	3
Leadership and management	3
Safeguarding	3
Equality and diversity	3
Subject Areas	Grade
Hairdressing and beauty therapy	3

Overall effectiveness

- Apprentices' achievement of their qualifications is inadequate and the apprentices make slow progress. Advanced apprentices' achievement of their qualifications in 2008/09 was good and these apprentices make satisfactory or better progress. Too few apprentices progress onto the advanced level programme. Learners gain good personal and social skills that help them to work effectively within their hairdressing salons. They enjoy their learning with ITS. Learners develop satisfactory hairdressing skills.
- Teaching, learning and assessment are satisfactory overall but good in key skills. A high number of learners with identified literacy and/or numeracy support needs receive good specialist coaching. Learners work in prestigious hairdressing salons where they have good opportunities for practical training. Trainer assessors provide effective individual training and demonstrations, but theory training is sometimes adversely affected by being given in busy and noisy salons. Trainer assessors provide useful feedback to help learners improve their hairdressing skills. They do not set sufficiently challenging or measurable targets for learners. Learners' progress is not always effectively reviewed and their managers are not sufficiently involved. Learning and assessment are flexible and meet the needs of learners and employers well. ITS has good partnerships with particularly good salons. Learners receive satisfactory care, guidance and support.

4. Management of the training is satisfactory, but leaders and managers have not been swift enough in improving learners' achievement rates. Trainer assessors are well qualified and trained, with good access to learning resources. Managers have appropriate safeguarding arrangements and learners feel safe. Trainer assessors promote equality and diversity thoroughly at the start of learners' programmes but do not sufficiently revisit this throughout the course. Leaders and managers have a good awareness of what ITS needs to improve and have suitable plans for improvement. In view of the above factors, ITS has a satisfactory capacity to improve.

Main findings

- Apprentices' overall success rates are low and have been below national rates for three years. Too many learners make slow progress towards achieving their qualifications. Overall and timely success rates for advanced apprentices were good in 2008/09, but this programme accounts for approximately 14% of leavers in that year.
- Learners develop good personal and social skills. They have a professional manner and interact with customers well. Learners demonstrate satisfactory hairdressing skills. The number that progress to the advanced apprenticeship is low.
- Key skills training is particularly good. Learners have very precise targets for key skills which enable them to complete them very early in their programme. In key skills lessons, learners are given very meaningful activities which directly relate to hairdressing and their salon. The high proportion of learners identified as having additional learning support needs receive good individual coaching.
- Learners are employed in high quality salons that are well resourced to support practical training. They aspire to the high professional standards demonstrated by colleagues who work in their salons. Although most trainer assessors deliver satisfactory theory training, this occasionally takes place in cramped and noisy areas, amongst clients.
- The vocational teaching, learning and assessment are satisfactory. In the better learning sessions, trainer assessors provide highly effective demonstrations. Learners receive good individual training. Feedback is prompt and aids their development. In the less effective learning sessions, learners are insufficiently challenged.
- Learners' progress reviews and target setting are inadequate. Learners do not have sufficiently detailed or measurable targets to help them complete their qualification or units. Their managers are not sufficiently involved in either the setting or reviewing of learners' targets. A small number of learners have not had progress reviews for six months and they are making slow progress.
- ITS has developed good partnerships with particularly good salons and hairdressing groups. The organisation has trained high numbers of in-salon assessors to provide ongoing training and assessment and a coherent programme for learners. Many learners benefit from additional product training

and external visits through their employers. ITS's training is flexible and meets employers' and learners' needs well.

- Care, guidance and support are satisfactory. Learners with identified social needs receive very focused and effective support from a specialist life coach. Their employers and peers provide a caring environment at work. Trainer assessors give learners helpful guidance and support, but this is not always sufficiently directed towards improving their progress.
- ITS has good strategic direction. Directors have invested significantly in developing resources to meet learners' and business needs. Staff training and development are well planned, prioritised and evaluated. Directors use employers' feedback well to develop the provision and introduce new initiatives. They work productively with partners to share expertise.
- Directors and managers have been too slow in taking effective action to improve success rates. They very accurately recognise what needs to be improved and set challenging targets, which are not always achieved. In the current year, managers are more thoroughly monitoring learners' progress and there are early signs of improvement.
- Directors have effectively prioritised safeguarding. Managers, trainer assessors and employers ensure that learners feel safe. ITS promotes health and safety issues well, but some employers and in-salon assessors have insufficient awareness of their safeguarding responsibilities for learners aged under 18.
- ITS promotes equality and diversity strongly within its strategies and mission statement. Staff and learners have effective initial equality and diversity training. Learners' awareness is not sufficiently extended during their progress reviews or training sessions. Directors and managers routinely analyse participation and success rate trends, but have not resolved the declining timely success rates of learners receiving additional support.
- The self-assessment process is very comprehensive and accurate but managers and internal verifiers, who routinely observe teaching, learning and assessment, are not always sufficiently critical. All staff have good involvement in monitoring and implementing quality improvement. Managers have increased their monitoring systems, but some are not fully effective.

What does Inter Training Services Limited need to do to improve further?

- Improve overall and timely success rates by ensuring that clearer and more measurable targets are set during progress reviews so that learners know what they need to do to progress, complete their programme in a timelier manner and, where appropriate, progress onto the advanced apprenticeship.
- Ensure that managers are fully involved in target setting and monitoring at learners' progress reviews.
- Strengthen the systems for evaluating and monitoring the quality of teaching, learning, progress reviews and assessment to improve the learners' experience

and identify performance issues with specific trainer assessors or in-salon assessors at an early stage.

- Make more effective use of data to set appropriate targets for improvement and monitor trends by different groups of learners.
- Work with employers, in-salon assessors and learners to increase their awareness of safeguarding and equality and diversity, making the topics more relevant to their work situation.

Summary of the views of users as confirmed by inspectors

What learners like:

- the way that they have learned a lot very quickly through the hands-on training and support
- the help and individual tuition that they get from their trainer assessors
- the fun element that is added to the training, for instance, by making topics based on science really interesting
- the key skills support which is good, especially when this has been related to work, for example with stocktaking
- the style of working, where their learning is delivered in the workplace.

What learners would like to see improved:

- the evenness of the spread of advanced apprentices' theory and key skills work across the course
- their targets, and particularly the end date for the qualification, which they would like to be more realistic and much clearer
- the continuity in assessment, ensuring that they are not left with gaps when assessors, including those who are in-salon, leave
- the tasks they are set to complete between visits so they make faster progress
- the frequency of visits from their trainer assessors; they would like more visits especially for assessment.

Summary of the views of employers as confirmed by inspectors

What employers like:

- the way that trainer assessors, managers and directors work with them and their learners, providing a good service
- the regular communication and support that they have from trainer assessors, managers and directors
- the 'its a hair thing' magazine, which is interesting and publishes the names of learners who have recently achieved
- the way that ITS identifies when something is not working and is always looking at how they can improve

- the way that ITS keeps them well informed about industry and qualification updates.

What employers would like to see improved:

- the way that a minority of trainer assessors have not been firm enough with learners about their work and deadlines
- the guidance they are given about safeguarding, as they would like more.

Main inspection report

Capacity to make and sustain improvement

Grade 3

5. Directors set a strong vision and strategy for improvement. They have invested significantly in developing staff and resources. Despite having considerable staff changes in 2008/09, ITS now has a more stable organisational structure that places them in a better position to effect improvement. The company's self-assessment process is highly accurate. Managers and directors have clearly identified what needs to be improved. All staff are fully involved in, and take specific responsibility for, implementing and monitoring their progress towards improvement. ITS made appropriate improvements in 2008/09 to key skills delivery, initial assessment, additional learning support and online testing that improved their learners' experiences. Despite directors setting ambitious targets to improve success rates, they remain low and actions taken have been too slow in raising outcomes. However, success rates in 2009/10 are showing early signs of improvement. Inspection grades have not improved since the last inspection, mainly due to low outcomes.

Outcomes for learners

Grade 4

6. In 2008/09, advanced apprentices had good overall success rates that are well above national rates, but these have dipped slightly in the current year. Apprentices' overall and timely success rates are low and have been below national rates for the last three years. Too many learners make slow progress towards achieving their qualifications. However, in 2009/10, the number of learners who have exceeded their planned end date for the programme has been reduced. Learners receiving additional learning support have typically achieved better than all learners, but their timely success rates have declined over the last three years.
7. Learners develop good personal and social skills. They behave in a professional manner and interact well with customers. Learners enjoy their learning which they find relevant to the work in their salons. They demonstrate satisfactory practical hairdressing skills. However, the number of learners who progress onto the advanced apprenticeship is low.
8. Learners fully understand their rights and responsibilities as learners at work. They feel safe at work and use safe working practices. Their managers take appropriate care in ensuring their safety.

The quality of provision

Grade 3

9. Learners receive good key skills training. They have precise targets which enable key skills to be completed early in the programme. In key skills lessons, learners are fully engaged in meaningful activities which directly relate to the workplace. Trainer assessors very effectively break difficult topics into small learning steps to enhance learners' understanding. Learners receive good

individual coaching for their additional learning needs. They complete a comprehensive initial assessment that clearly identifies the skills they need to develop.

10. The vocational teaching, learning and assessment are satisfactory. Learners are employed in high quality salons that are well resourced to support practical training. Their aspirations are raised by working with senior colleagues who are good role models producing high standards of commercial work. In the better learning sessions, trainer assessors give highly effective demonstrations, regularly check learning and promote health and safety well. Learners receive good individual training and prompt feedback, enhanced by the low ratio of learners to trainer assessors. Trainer assessors and learners make satisfactory use of recently introduced learning and assessment technology. In the less effective learning sessions, learners are insufficiently challenged. Although most trainer assessors use satisfactory resources for theory training, they sometimes deliver this in cramped and noisy areas, amongst clients.
11. Learners do not have sufficiently detailed or measurable targets to help them complete their qualification or units. Their managers are not always involved in either the setting or reviewing of learners' targets. A small number of learners have not had progress reviews for six months and they are making slow progress. Trainer assessors do not sufficiently check and develop learners' knowledge and understanding of equality of opportunity and health and safety during progress reviews.
12. Learners' needs are satisfactorily met through their learning programme. Learners enjoy learning in the workplace. Many employers provide good enrichment activities, including external training and visits, to widen learners' product knowledge. Learners are inspired and enjoy the challenge they have through ITS's annual photographic competition. Trainer assessors work productively with employers to ensure that training is flexible and meets their needs well.
13. ITS has developed good partnerships with some very prestigious salons and hairdressing groups. It has a high number of in-salon assessors, enabling learners to have access to regular training and assessment and a coherent learning programme. However, many managers are insufficiently involved in planning or reviewing their learners' programme.
14. Care, guidance and support are satisfactory. Learners with identified social needs receive focused support from a specialist life coach when required. Their employers and peers provide a caring environment at work. Trainer assessors provide satisfactory guidance and support, but this is not always directed sufficiently towards improving learners' progress.

Leadership and management

Grade 3

15. Directors set a sound strategic direction that clearly details ITS's business and development plans. They have given good consideration to the challenging funding situation and are developing partnerships to share expertise and further develop the provision. Managers and directors respond well to employers' needs when establishing new initiatives. Directors have made a significant investment in developing resources to meet learners' and business needs, including learning and assessment technology. Staff training and development are well planned, prioritised and evaluated.
16. ITS is making slow progress in improving overall and timely success rates. Directors set a challenging target for improving timely success rates for 2009/10, which has not been met and has been subsequently reduced. Trainer assessors are not set individual targets for success rates. Significant staff changes have impeded the rate of improvement. Some recent changes in management and more stringent monitoring of learners' progress are showing early signs of improvement. Directors and managers have greatly improved how they use data to monitor progress, but are not yet sufficiently analysing performance by individual trainer assessors or in-salon assessors.
17. Safeguarding arrangements are satisfactory. All trainer assessors and in-salon assessors are checked with the Criminal Records Bureau and their disclosure details recorded. Trainer assessors have been appropriately trained and are aware of what to do when issues arise. Directors have incorporated safeguarding within their health and safety policy, but not clearly stated the reporting procedures for safeguarding incidents. Despite ITS covering safeguarding topics in their regular magazine to salons, the in-salon assessors and managers are not sufficiently clear of ITS's, or their own, role. ITS staff routinely carry out appropriate health and safety risk assessments that include specific checks for learners aged under 18, but a minority of paperwork is incomplete or unsigned.
18. ITS promotes equality and diversity strongly within its strategies and mission statement. The company's equality of opportunity policies are comprehensive and informative. Learners and staff complete a thorough project when they start that develops their knowledge of equality and diversity. Learners know how to recognise unfair, unsafe or abusive treatment by others and what action to take to protect themselves and other learners. Where issues have arisen in the workplace, ITS has dealt with these appropriately. Trainer assessors do not sufficiently reinforce or extend learners' knowledge of equality and diversity during progress reviews or training sessions. Directors and managers analyse data to some extent, particularly about learners who are enrolled. They have introduced several initiatives to try to increase participation by under-represented groups, particularly men. Directors and managers correctly identify trends in success rates by some different groups, but have not sufficiently addressed some of the low or declining success rates.

19. Employers' views are routinely collected and used to improve the provision. ITS effectively rotates assessor meetings between different days and locations to enable more employer staff to give their feedback. Directors took the conscious decision to collect learners' views through individual discussions rather than formal questionnaires to gain more evaluative feedback. They effectively use learners' views to make improvements, including increasing the use of technology for training and assessment and redesigning the learners' equipment bags.
20. ITS has a thorough, comprehensive and inclusive self-assessment process. Directors and managers use the available information well to produce a highly accurate and self-critical assessment of the provision. Staff are fully involved in monitoring progress towards improvement. Internal verification is satisfactory and improving assessor performance. Some of ITS's monitoring systems are not fully effective, particularly those that audit progress reviews and learners who are solely assessed by in-salon assessors. Directors recognise that their system for the observation of teaching and learning is insufficiently critical and are reviewing these arrangements.
21. ITS offers inadequate value for money because the achievement of qualifications are so low. Directors have made good investments in developing staff, resources and technology to meet the current and future needs of the company and learners.

Information about the inspection

22. 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, reports from the inspectorate's quality monitoring inspection, and data on learners and their achievement over the period since the previous inspection.
23. Inspectors used group and individual interviews, telephone calls and emails. They observed learning sessions, assessments and progress reviews.

Record of Main Findings (RMF)

Inter Training Services Limited

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	89	89
Part-time learners		
Overall effectiveness	4	4
Capacity to improve	3	
Outcomes for learners	4	4
How well do learners achieve and enjoy their learning?	4	
How well do learners attain their learning goals?	4	
How well do learners progress?	4	
How well do learners improve their economic and social well-being through learning and development?	3	
How safe do learners feel?	3	
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	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?	3	
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	
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?	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?	4	

*where applicable to the type of provision

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