

Northamptonshire Industrial Training Association Limited

Inspection report

Unique reference number: 53534

Name of lead inspector: Maxine Mayer HMI

Last day of inspection: 27 August 2010

Type of provider: Independent learning provider

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Information about the provider

1. Northamptonshire Industrial Training Association Limited (Nital) is a charitable company established in 1969. It provides, under the guidance of a board of trustees and directors apprenticeship training in engineering and manufacturing, construction, planning and the built environment, retail and commercial enterprise and business administration and law. Nital also offers foundation programmes in Entry to Employment. Due to low learner numbers at the time of inspection only the engineering and manufacturing and business administration and law programmes were reported upon although inspectors took into account the performance of the apprenticeship programmes in the other subject sector areas.
2. Nital is based in Corby, Northamptonshire but learners are recruited from across all of Northamptonshire and a few from further afield. The majority of the company business is government-funded by the Skills Funding Agency and Northamptonshire local authority. Nital also offers commercially funded courses and conducts work on behalf of other training providers.
3. Unemployment rates in Northamptonshire are around those for the rest of the East Midlands region though the percentage of the population with no qualifications is around 1% higher.
4. The provider provides training on behalf of the following providers:
 - Northamptonshire Training and Development Consortium
 - East of England Train to Gain Consortium
5. The following organisations provide training on behalf of the provider:
 - Northampton College
 - Tresham College

Type of provision	Number of enrolled learners in 2008/09
Provision for young learners: Entry to Employment	31 full-time learners
Employer provision: Apprenticeships	165 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 2
	Grade
Outcomes for learners	2
Quality of provision	2
Leadership and management	2
Safeguarding	3
Equality and diversity	2
Subject Areas	Grade
Engineering and manufacturing technologies	2
Business Administration and law	2

Overall effectiveness

6. The overall effectiveness of the apprenticeship programmes is good. Outcomes for learners are good and most learners are successful. Apprentices enjoy their training and produce good quality work. The quality of provision is good. Teaching and learning are good and for those learners who attend college as part of their apprenticeship this aspect is well monitored. Nital has good partnership arrangements with employers and other agencies and these arrangements benefit the apprentices.
7. Programmes are well managed both at board and operational management levels. The management team ensure good resources and apprentices are well cared for. Equality and diversity are well promoted and Nital is taking significant actions to improve the percentage of learners undertaking its programmes from minority ethnic groups and females who are traditionally under-represented in its largest sector subject area. Learners feel safe and the arrangements for their health and safety and welfare are satisfactory.

Main findings

- Overall success rates are good and well above national averages in most cases. They have consistently improved over the last three years. The percentage of learners who complete within their planned timescale is also consistently improving and is at least satisfactory overall. Current learners are making good progress and data for 2009/10 indicates that the improving trends are continuing.
- Learners develop good job and personal skills. They take on additional responsibilities, develop a good range of technical skills and improve their confidence and teamwork skills. They provide a good standard of work in their jobs and become a valued member of staff. Many learners progress to positions of responsibility enabling them to achieve promotion or salary increases.
- Teaching, learning, and assessment are good. Employers provide good quality individual on-the-job training. Training advisers give very effective coaching in the workplace to support learning. All engineering learners also attend college for additional learning which Nital closely monitors. Staff have good experience and are well qualified. However, the monitoring of progress and target setting by trainers are sometimes ineffective.
- Nital very effectively meets learner and employer needs. Employers receive good information at the start of programme and are closely involved in agreeing appropriate qualifications to meet job needs. Nital takes care to match learners' individual employment objectives to employers' specific job vacancies.
- Partnership arrangements are effective. Nital works with a range of partners for the benefit of learners. The working relationships with Connexions and colleges of further education are particularly strong. However, Nital does not promote its programmes to prospective learners well enough through partnership working.
- Support for learners is good. Learners receive regular, effective visits from training advisers and good relationships exist between all parties. Learners facing redundancy have been effectively supported to find alternative employment. Additional support is available to meet individual learners' needs. Learners receive appropriate information, advice and guidance.
- Apprenticeship programmes are well managed. The board and senior managers are setting high standards for the provision. Very detailed and close monitoring of performance is ensuring continuous improvement of programmes that are well aligned to local and national priorities.
- Arrangements for safeguarding are well promoted to employers and learners feel safe. All staff have enhanced Criminal Records Bureau (CRB) checks and appropriate records are held. All staff have received introductory safeguarding training and the nominated safeguarding manager has received enhanced training. Nital understands where learners are at most risk and work appropriately with the local safeguarding board.
- Equality and diversity are well promoted. Training is integrated effectively during induction, off-the-job training and reviews. Learners have a good understanding of their rights and responsibilities. The provider is undertaking

significant actions to promote its programmes to minority ethnic groups and females who are currently under-represented.

- The provider engages effectively with users to support and promote improvement. Learner and employer views are collected and analysed through the use of questionnaires on an annual basis and the provider is successfully improving response rates through improved practice.
- Quality improvement arrangements are strong and have improved since the last inspection. The self-assessment process is good, making full use of data analysis and taking into account the views of learners and staff. The monitoring of the performance of subcontractors is frequent and thorough.
- The provider is securing good value for money. A high percentage of learners are successful in their programmes and resources are well managed to the benefit of learners and employers.

What does Nital need to do to improve further?

- Continue to improve success rates by better monitoring of learners' progress throughout their qualification.
- Continue to improve the percentage of learners who complete within the planned duration of their programme by setting more challenging targets.
- Continue to increase the participation of minority ethnic and female learners by the implementation of the equality and diversity action plan.
- Improve the participation in apprenticeship programmes by developing a more effective strategy to engage young people in employment and training.

Summary of the views of users as confirmed by inspectors

What learners like:

- the really helpful staff, particularly at difficult times
- that all the qualification is done in the workplace
- the opportunity to get a qualification on our CV
- the chance to learn a lot about employment rights and legislation
- that a lot of learning is on-the-job
- the good communications with the training advisers
- the thoroughness of the training advisers/assessors.

What learners would like to see improved:

- the amount of work set between visits, to progress faster
- the rate of progress of the qualification.

Summary of the views of employers as confirmed by inspectors

What employers like:

- the initial meetings and information in order to plan programmes
- the well-informed and well-planned review and assessment visits
- that Nital does good initial screening of job applicants
- that programmes help learners understand their job better and give them better focus
- the regularity of work-place visits and personal contact.

What employers would like to see improved:

- that the programmes could be more challenging for the very competent learners.

Main inspection report

Capacity to make and sustain improvement Grade 2

8. Nital is making good improvements and has responded well to key areas of improvement identified at the last inspection. Each year since 2007 it has improved its overall success rates for learners to levels that are now good with published data confirming that in the first nine months of 2009/10 success rates within planned timescales are continuing to improve and are high.
9. The board and management set high standards and demanding targets for the programme and for the work of subcontractors. Priorities are clear and difficulties in the engineering sector due to the recent economic downturn are being well managed for the benefit of learners. Resources are particularly well deployed for the benefit of learners and employers. A strong culture of continuous improvement exists throughout Nital.
10. Managers use self-assessment well in order to promote improvement. Action planning is good, particularly for improving the promotion of equality and diversity and participation of under-represented groups.

Outcomes for learners Grade 2

11. Outcomes for learners and success rates are good. In 2008/09, ten of twelve business administration learners successfully completed their programme on time, which was above the national average. In the current year, all seven learners who have left have successfully completed on time. In engineering the success rates for level 3 apprentices in 2008/09 is 87.9%, which is above the national average. For level 2 apprentices in 2008/09 in manufacturing technologies the success rate is very high at 91.7%. However, the success rate in 2008/09 for the remaining level 2 engineering apprentices is low at 55.9% and significantly below the national average. Too few achieve within their planned timescales. During 2009, the redundancy of 21 engineering apprentices affected an improving trend. Progress of most learners currently on programme is good. Data analysis is thorough and closely monitored by managers to ensure that all groups of learners achieve as well as each other.
12. Learners enjoy their training and value the opportunities to improve their employability. The standard of learners' work in portfolios is good with some examples of very detailed work records. Learners present their portfolios well and they contain a wide variety of evidence of competence including witness testimonies, observations, photographs and video footage. Learners enjoy their training and value the opportunities to improve their employability.
13. Learners develop good job and personal skills. They take on additional responsibilities and increasingly develop a good range of job skills in business administration and engineering. They improve their confidence, work related

skills and teamwork skills. They provide a good standard of work in their jobs and become a valued member of staff. Many learners progress to positions of responsibility and work effectively to the advantage of their employers. A significant number of learners progress to higher levels of study.

14. Learners feel safe in their workplace. Nital undertakes thorough checks of the workplace and of the individual learners' health, safety and welfare. Learners demonstrate safe working practices. Employers have an effective culture of high health and safety awareness and the development of safe working practices.

The quality of provision

Grade 2

15. The overall quality of provision is good. Teaching, learning and assessment are good. Learners receive good individual on-the-job training from their employers that effectively develops them in their job roles. Training advisers provide very effective coaching in the workplace to support learning. All engineering learners also attend college for additional learning which Nital monitors closely. Staff have good experience and are well qualified. Assessment is generally thorough, with effective action planning and use of a sufficient variety of assessment methods. Individual learning plans clearly set out the learner's programme with clear recording of mid and long-term targets. Reviews of learners' progress are satisfactory in monitoring progress in the job role and training needs. The reviews also record percentage progress against NVQ units, key skills and technical certificate. However, the monitoring of qualification achievement is sometimes insufficient. Target setting does not always sufficiently meet individual learners' needs. A few learners are able to make quicker progress if set more work between assessment visits and more challenging targets.
16. The provision for literacy, numeracy and language support is satisfactory. Additional support is available to meet individual learners' needs, whether in preparation for tests or for key skills support. Staff are appropriately qualified and offer the support either at the centre or in the workplace.
17. Nital very effectively meets learner and employer needs. Employers receive good information at the start of the programme and are closely involved in agreeing appropriate qualifications to meet the job needs. Nital takes care to match learners' individual employment objectives to employers' specific job vacancies. Initial assessment is thorough and ensures learners are on the right programmes and receive appropriate support. Nital staff plan visits flexibly in order to meet the needs and work constraints of employers.
18. Partnership arrangements are effective. Nital works with a range of partners for the benefit of learners. The working relationships with Connexions and colleges of further education are particularly strong. However, the promotion of programmes to prospective learners is insufficient. Nital is not engaging well enough with school children in order to have sufficient applications for the vacancies and opportunities that employers are offering.

19. Support for learners is good. Learners receive regular, effective visits from training advisers and good relationships exist between all parties. Induction is effective and includes a one-day session at the training centre. It covers all aspects of the learners' programme, and learners receive good quality information, including a CD-ROM. However, trainers do not always sufficiently engage learners in all aspects of the induction programme.
20. Learners receive appropriate information, advice and guidance throughout their programme, with a continual focus on their training needs. The exit interview process has a good focus on progression opportunities.

Leadership and management

Grade 2

21. Apprenticeship programmes are well managed. The board and senior managers are setting high standards for the provision with demanding targets. The board meet very frequently and have good involvement with identifying programme improvements. Very detailed and close monitoring of performance by managers is ensuring continuous improvement of programmes that are well aligned to local and national priorities.
22. Arrangements for safeguarding are well promoted to employers and learners feel safe. Good work is being undertaken with employers to increase their understanding of potential welfare issues when working with young people. Promotion of safeguarding to young people is generally satisfactory, but is not sufficiently interactive during induction. All staff have enhanced CRB checks and a central list is held. All staff have received introductory safeguarding training and the nominated safeguarding manager has received enhanced training. Nital understands where learners are at most risk and works appropriately with the local safeguarding board.
23. Equality and diversity are good. Training for apprentices is integrated effectively during induction, off-the-job training and reviews. Learners have a good understanding of their rights and responsibilities. All staff including the board undertake training and equality and diversity is a standing agenda item on all team meetings. The provider is undertaking significant actions in order to promote its programmes to minority ethnic groups and females who are currently under-represented. For instance it has identified in the Northamptonshire region where vacancies exist and is actively promoting these to minority ethnic community groups. Nital has a strong ethos of inclusion and ensures that all learners have access to its programmes by making adjustments as necessary. Detailed analysis is undertaken to ensure that all groups of learners achieve as well as each other and there are no significant differences. A well devised equality and diversity action plan is ensuring that promotion of equality and diversity is monitored by an equality and diversity steering group.
24. The provider engages effectively with users to support and promote improvement. Learner and employer views are collected and analysed through

the use of questionnaires on an annual basis. The provider identified that response rates from employers was poor. It has changed its practice in the collection of employer views and now has a satisfactory response rates. However, insufficient feedback is given to employers on the actions that Nital takes in response to questionnaires.

25. Quality improvement arrangements are strong and have improved since the last inspection. The self-assessment process is good, making full use of data analysis and taking into account the views of learners, employers, staff and partners. The self-assessment report is accurate. The monitoring of the performance of subcontractors is frequent and thorough. This has led to good working relationships and is an improvement since the last inspection. Development planning is good and has a high priority within Nital.
26. The provider is securing good value for money. A high percentage of learners are successful in their programmes and achieve within the planned duration. Resources are good and well managed to the benefit of learners and employers. Nital is developing its use of technology in order to improve environmental sustainability.

Subject areas

Engineering and manufacturing technologies

Grade 2

Context

27. Fifty seven learners are on a engineering and manufacturing apprenticeship. Thirty four of these are at an advanced level. Apprenticeships are offered in mechanical, electrical, manufacturing and motor vehicles engineering. Most learners are male, aged between 16 and 18 and all are employed. All learners attend off-the-job training for the completion of technical certificates. Training advisers visit learners in their work places at least monthly.

Key findings

- Success rates are good overall and improving. The success rates for level 3 apprentices in 2008/09 and for level 2 apprentices in manufacturing technologies are high. However, the success rate in 2008/09 for the remaining level 2 apprentices is low and too few achieve within their planned timescales. The redundancy of 21 apprentices during 2009 affected these programmes.
- The standard of learners' work in portfolios is good with some examples of very detailed work records. Portfolios contain a wide variety of well presented evidence of competence including witness testimonies, observations, photographs and video footage. Learners enjoy their training and value the opportunities to improve their employability.
- Learners make good progress in developing employability skills and many demonstrate high levels of technical skill. Many apprentices progress to positions of responsibility and work effectively to the advantage of their employers. A significant number of learners progress to the next level of study.
- Nital has an appropriate focus on health and safety. Learners understand their rights and responsibilities at work and enjoy their training. Employers have a culture of high health and safety awareness and the development of safe working practices.
- Training and learning are good. Practical training in the workplace ensures that learners develop good work related skills that meet industry standards. In many instances, vocationally competent skilled operatives effectively mentor apprentices through their training. Associated theory to support practical activities is delivered well by one of two further education colleges.
- Assessment of apprentice portfolio evidence is thorough and well recorded. Particularly good use is made of workplace observations and the use of ICT to assess skills and competence. However, tracking of learners' progress and achievement towards their vocational qualification is inconsistent. The percentage achievement of qualifications does not always accurately reflect current progress. Internal verification is thorough and robust.
- Induction to Nital's apprenticeship effectively covers all aspects of the learners' qualifications. Aspects of health and safety, equality and diversity and

safeguarding are discussed but there is too little learner involvement and interaction within this training.

- Guidance and support for learners are good, particularly in relation to job retention and seeking. Several learners have been made redundant and Nital provides highly effective support to apprentices to enable them to remain in education and training while finding them alternative employment. Good one-to-one support is given by trainers and workplace mentors but none of this is formally recorded.
- Targets set during progress reviews are generally good but are not always sufficiently challenging learners to complete in a more timely fashion. The overall tracking of learners' progress does not allow learners, employers and assessors to judge progress against target.
- Staff are vocationally well qualified with many years of industrial experience and have recently gained, or are working towards, an appropriate teaching qualification. Resources in the workplace are good. Workshops and offices are well equipped and learners have access to advanced technology and are effectively trained to maintain high standards. Workplace trainers are highly skilled and enthusiastic.
- The programmes are very flexible and responsive in meeting both learners' and employers' needs. Assessors, employers and learners work well together to ensure the right mixture of qualifications and units are included in the framework. Employers, workloads and training plans are effectively used to guide the choices made.
- Partnership working satisfactorily enhances learners' experience. Partnerships are developed with colleges and Connexions to support learners in accessing relevant training. Nital has long standing, good relationships with employers across a wide range of engineering and manufacturing disciplines.

What does Nital need to do to improve further?

- Review and strengthen the process for monitoring learners' achievement towards their vocational qualification to support the continuing improvement of the success rates.
- Improve the consistency of target setting at reviews and assessment to give learners clearer challenging short term targets to encourage them to complete their qualifications within their planned timescales.

Business Administration and Law

Grade 2

Context

28. Eleven learners are currently on an apprenticeship programme. Of these, nine are at level two, with eight working towards qualifications in business administration and one in customer service. Two learners are on an advanced apprenticeship in business administration. The learners work in a variety of small to medium sized businesses, mostly in the manufacturing and engineering sector. Seven learners are female.

Key findings

- Success rates are good. In 2008/09, ten of twelve learners successfully completed their programme on time, which is above national rates. In the current year, all seven learners who have left have successfully completed on time. Progress of learners currently on programme is at least satisfactory or better.
- Learners develop good job and personal skills. They take on additional responsibilities and increasingly develop a good range of job skills in business administration. They improve their confidence and teamwork skills. They provide a good standard of work in their jobs and become a valued member of staff. Many learners achieve progress in jobs through promotion or salary increases.
- Learners feel safe in their workplace. Nital undertakes thorough checks in the workplace of the learners' health, safety and welfare. Learners demonstrate safe working practices. Induction and reviews are generally effective in providing information and checking learners' understanding of health and safety and equality and diversity. However, learners' specific understanding of safeguarding is sometimes insufficient.
- Teaching and learning are good and assessment is satisfactory. On-the-job training for learners is very effective. Employers provide good initial and on-going one-to-one training to develop learners' skills to meet job requirements. Training advisers give very effective coaching in the workplace to develop skills such as use of spreadsheets. Assessment is satisfactory with good quality portfolios of evidence.
- Planning of learning is satisfactory. Reviews are effective in monitoring the learners' progress in learning and their job. However, target setting is insufficiently challenging for a few learners, leaving them with insufficient work to do between training adviser visits. This delays the progress for these learners.
- Nital meets employers' and learners' needs very effectively. Employers receive good quality information at the start of programme and they understand their role well. Nital's recruitment of learners matches learners to potential job vacancies well. Employers and learners have good involvement in negotiating appropriate qualifications to meet the job and learner objectives.

- Partnerships with employers are good. Employers have good involvement throughout the learners' apprenticeship. They participate effectively in quarterly reviews, as well as contributing and receiving regular feedback at assessment visits. Good partnerships also exist with Connexions to recruit learners seeking apprenticeships.
- Support for learners is satisfactory. Learners receive a regular and reliable monthly visit from their training adviser. Between training adviser visits they can easily make contact to discuss any issues. Support to help learners prepare for tests is effective and additional learning support for literacy and numeracy is available if required.
- Information, advice and guidance is effective. Learners receive appropriate information and advice at the start of their programme to help them choose the components of their apprenticeship. Good discussions plan progression opportunities. Induction is satisfactory. All learners attend a full-day induction at the training centre, but trainers do not always sufficiently engage learners to check their understanding.
- Leadership and management are good. Staff have a clear understanding of the organisation's aims and objectives. Communication between managers and staff is good. Training, development and performance management of staff is regular and particularly effective in raising standards for learners.
- The promotion of equality and diversity is satisfactory. Learners receive good information at induction and whilst working towards their qualifications. Nital effectively check employers' policies and procedures at the start of programme. Reviews are generally effective in checking learners' understanding. However, in a few cases learners demonstrate an insufficient understanding and training advisers do not always effectively challenge them.
- Quality improvement arrangements are adequate. Staff have sufficient involvement in self-assessment and the report is accurate. Internal verification is adequate. Standardisation meetings occur sufficiently often to share good practice effectively. Internal verifier feedback to assessors is good, with clear suggestions for improvement. However, action planning for assessors is not always sufficiently clear and effective.

What does Nital need to do to improve further?

- Ensure all learners make progress according to their individual needs by setting sufficiently challenging individual targets.
- Further develop assessment practice by more effective action planning at internal verification.
- Further improve learners understanding of safeguarding and equality and diversity by better reinforcement at induction and reviews of progress.

Information about the inspection

29. One of Her Majesty's Inspectors (HMI) and two additional inspectors, assisted by the provider's operations manager, as nominee, carried out the inspection. Inspectors also took account of the provider's most recent self-assessment report and development plans, comments from the 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.

30. Inspectors used group and individual interviews, telephone calls and emails. They looked at questionnaires learners and employers had recently completed on behalf of the provider. They also observed learning sessions, assessments and progress reviews. Inspectors collected evidence from programmes in engineering and manufacturing technologies and business administration and law but not specifically for the other subject areas the provider offers.

Record of Main Findings (RMF)

Nital

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	85	85
Part-time learners	0	0
Overall effectiveness	2	2
Capacity to improve	2	
Outcomes for learners	2	2
How well do learners achieve and enjoy their learning?	2	
How well do learners attain their learning goals?	2	
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?	2	
How well partnerships with schools, employers, community groups and others lead to benefits for learners?	3	
How effective are the care, guidance and support learners receive in helping them to achieve?	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?*	2	
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?	2	
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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