

INSPECTION REPORT

Boston & South Holland Information Technology Centre

24 September 2001



ADULT LEARNING
INSPECTORATE

Grading

Inspectors use a seven-point scale to summarise their judgements about the quality of learning sessions. The descriptors for the seven grades are:

- *grade 1 - excellent*
- *grade 2 - very good*
- *grade 3 - good*
- *grade 4 - satisfactory*
- *grade 5 - unsatisfactory*
- *grade 6 - poor*
- *grade 7 - very poor.*

Inspectors use a five-point scale to summarise their judgements about the quality of provision in occupational/curriculum areas and in New Deal options. The same scale is used to describe the quality of leadership and management, which includes quality assurance and equality of opportunity. The descriptors for the five grades are:

- *grade 1 - outstanding*
- *grade 2 - good*
- *grade 3 - satisfactory*
- *grade 4 - unsatisfactory*
- *grade 5 - very weak.*

The two grading scales relate to each other as follows:

SEVEN-POINT SCALE	FIVE-POINT SCALE
grade 1	grade 1
grade 2	
grade 3	grade 2
grade 4	grade 3
grade 5	grade 4
grade 6	grade 5
grade 7	

Adult Learning Inspectorate

The Adult Learning Inspectorate (ALI) was established under the provisions of the *Learning and Skills Act 2000* to bring the inspection of all aspects of adult learning and work-based training within the remit of a single inspectorate. The ALI is responsible for inspecting a wide range of government-funded learning, including:

- work-based training for all people over 16
- provision in further education colleges for people aged 19 and over
- the University for Industry's *learnirect* provision
- adult and community learning
- training given by the Employment Service under the New Deals.

Inspections are carried out in accordance with the *Common Inspection Framework* by teams of full-time inspectors and part-time associate inspectors who have knowledge of, and experience in, the work which they inspect. All providers are invited to nominate a senior member of their staff to participate in the inspection as a team member.

Inadequate provision

A provider's provision will normally be deemed to be less than adequate where

- one third or more of published grades for occupational/curriculum areas and New Deal options are judged less than satisfactory, or
- leadership and management are judged to be less than satisfactory

The final decision as to whether the provision is inadequate rests with the Chief Inspector of Adult Learning. The overall judgement as to whether the provision is adequate or inadequate is included in the summary section of the inspection report.

SUMMARY

The provider

Boston and South Holland Information Technology Centre is a charity-based private training organisation in south Lincolnshire. It provides training in land-based provision, construction, engineering, business administration, retailing, hospitality, hairdressing and health. There are 258 learners across the eight areas of learning. All learners are employed and work for a wide range of companies and organisations in a large rural area. Four training centres are located in small towns and villages across the area.

Overall judgement

With the exception of construction, hairdressing and hospitality, work-based learning is satisfactory. The land-based provision and business administration training is good. Leadership and management are satisfactory. Despite construction, hairdressing and hospitality being less than satisfactory, the quality of provision is adequate to meet the reasonable needs of those receiving it.

Work-based learning for young people

Work-based learning for young people in land-based provision and business administration is good. In engineering, retailing and customer service, and health and social care it is satisfactory. In construction, hairdressing and hospitality it is unsatisfactory. There are 62 advanced modern apprentices and 97 foundation modern apprentices. Ninety-nine learners are on national vocational qualification (NVQ) training programmes. A high proportion of learners is employed with a good range of supportive employers. Resources at work and at training centres are good. Off-the-job training is also good. On- and off-the-job training are not co-ordinated. Progress reviews are carried out regularly and in most cases are effective and involve all parties concerned. Learners are well supported by staff. When assessment is not subcontracted, it is of a good standard and takes place regularly. Key skills training is an integral part of the vocational training, but a high proportion of learners are not required to complete key skills qualifications. Progress is often slow. Internal verification is satisfactory. Training in the areas of learning which is unsatisfactory is subcontracted and there is little work-based assessment, no co-ordination of on- and off-the-job training and poor retention and achievement rates. For other areas of learning, there is a great deal of variation in retention and achievement rates, but overall they are satisfactory.

Leadership and management

Leadership and management are satisfactory. Most training is not subcontracted and is managed effectively. Where subcontractors are used, they are poorly managed.

Staff have a good understanding of quality assurance but do not make good use of target-setting and do not sufficiently evaluate the training. Management information is good and widely used. There is effective appraisal and development of staff. There is a good range of initiatives to widen participation in training across this remote and rural area. The promotion of equal opportunities is satisfactory although learners' understanding is limited. The self-assessment report identified most of the strengths and weaknesses, but did not place sufficient importance on the impact of some of the weaknesses.

GRADES

Land-based provision	2
Contributory grades:	
Work-based learning for young people	2

Construction	4
Contributory grades:	
Work-based learning for young people	4

Engineering, technology & manufacturing	3
Contributory grades:	
Work-based learning for young people	3

Business administration, management & professional	2
Contributory grades:	
Work-based learning for young people	2

Retailing, customer service & transportation	3
Contributory grades:	
Work-based learning for young people	3

Hospitality, sport, leisure & travel	4
Contributory grades:	
Work-based learning for young people	4

Hairdressing & beauty therapy	4
Contributory grades:	
Work-based learning for young people	4

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Health, social care & public services	3
Contributory grades:	
Work-based learning for young people	3

Leadership and management	3
Contributory grades:	
Equality of opportunity	2
Quality assurance	3

KEY STRENGTHS

- good workplace support from employers
- some good matching of training to individual needs
- good off-the-job training
- well-developed management information
- good initiatives to widen participation in training

KEY WEAKNESSES

- slow progress towards qualifications
- poor links between on- and off-the-job training
- poor management of subcontractors
- limited understanding of equal opportunities by learners
- insufficient evaluation of training

OTHER IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED

- better retention and achievement rates
- clearer strategy on the development of key skills

THE PROVIDER AND ITS CONTEXT

1. Boston and South Holland Information Technology Centre (the ITeC) is a company limited by guarantee and a registered charity. Its charitable aims are the promotion of training and recruitment in south Lincolnshire. The ITeC has training centres and separate recruitment offices in the towns of Boston, Grantham and Spalding. There is a small training facility in the village of Bourne and an additional recruitment office in the town of Stamford. The administrative headquarters is attached to Ayscoughfee Hall in Spalding. The ITeC was established in 1983 and has become well respected by the local community. It is strongly committed to striving for equality of opportunity in every aspect of its operation. Other activities include the supply of temporary staff to local businesses and the franchised provision of further education in information technology (IT) for adults and the community.

2. The ITeC's chief executive is supported by three senior managers and 34 full-time members of staff. The recruitment agency employs a manager and 11 staff. There are 288 learners in training, although the ITeC does not receive government funding for 30 of these. The remaining 258 are funded through a contract with Lincolnshire and Rutland Learning and Skills Council (LSC). Learners are spread across eight occupational areas and sub-contractors are used for four of the areas. Most learners receive in-house training and assessment from the ITeC. There are a total of 62 advanced modern apprentices and 97 foundation modern apprentices. The remaining 99 learners are following NVQ programmes.

3. The ITeC is based in south Lincolnshire where the local economy is heavily dependent upon the food growing and processing industries. The area is remote and rural with poor transport links and is in the top 20 most-deprived rural areas. In September 2001, the unemployment rate in Boston was 1.6 per cent and in South Holland 1.4 per cent, compared with 2.9 per cent nationally. The proportion of people from minority ethnic groups make up significantly less than 1 per cent, compared with the national average of 6.2 per cent. In September 2000, the proportion of school leavers achieving five or more general certificates of secondary education (GCSEs) at grade C and above was 42 per cent in Boston and 47 per cent in South Holland, compared with 49.2 per cent nationally.

THE INSPECTION

4. A team of nine inspectors spent a total of 36 days with the ITeC during September 2001. They interviewed 83 learners, conducted 39 interviews with the ITeC's staff, visited the premises of 51 employers and interviewed 48 workplace supervisors. They observed and graded nine learning sessions. Inspectors visited all of the ITeC's training centres and the premises of all subcontractors involved with training and assessment. They examined 60 portfolios, 82 individual learning plans and records of learners' initial assessment. They also examined policy and procedure documents, the organisation's strategic development plans, external verifier reports and the self-assessment reports for 2000 and 2001.

Grades awarded to learning sessions

	Grade 1	Grade 2	Grade 3	Grade 4	Grade 5	Grade 6	Grade 7	Total
Construction	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	1
Business administration, management & professional	0	0	4	1	0	0	0	5
Hairdressing & beauty therapy	0	0	2	1	0	0	0	3
Total	0	0	7	2	0	0	0	9

OCCUPATIONAL AREAS

Land-based provision

Grade 2

Programmes inspected	Number of learners	Contributory grade
Work-based learning for young people	11	2

5. The ITeC offers work-based learning in intensive crop production NVQ at levels 2, 3 and 4 and the training and assessment are subcontracted. The subcontractor is an association of 43 local commercial horticultural growers which was formed over 15 years ago for horticultural training. Six learners are following NVQ training at level 2, four are advanced modern apprentices and one is a foundation modern apprentice. They are all employed by members of the association. They are recruited throughout the year, either through application to the ITeC, through a company within the association, or through the careers service. Learners who are working towards the level 2 NVQ, receive five days off-the-job training each year. They also undertake a programme of visits to other nurseries and attend training courses for additional qualifications such as lift truck operation. Modern apprentices attend for two days training in IT for key skills. Other key skills are included in the horticultural training programme. Learners who are working towards the level 3 NVQ attend for six weeks' training at a local, specialised horticultural college, on block release. An assessor, who is employed by the association, carries out most of the workplace assessment. The subcontractor's training manager is responsible for internal verification and for all progress reviews in the workplace, which are carried out every 10 weeks. The self-assessment report identified most of the strengths and weaknesses and inspectors gave the same grade as that given in the self-assessment report.

The following tables show the achievement and retention rates available up to the time of inspection.

Work-based learning for young people										
Foundation modern apprenticeships (FMA)										
	1997-98		1998-99		1999-2000		2000-01		2001-02	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Number that started							1		1	
Still in training							0	0	1	100
FMA framework completed							0	0	0	0
NVQ level 2 completed							0	0	0	0
Left without completing the framework							0	0	0	0

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Work-based learning for young people										
Advanced modern apprenticeships (AMA)	1997-98		1998-99		1999-2000		2000-01		2001-02	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
	Number that started	4		4		3				4
Still in training	0	0	0	0	1	33			3	75
AMA framework completed	1	25	3	75	1	33				
NVQ level 2 completed	1	25	3	75	1	33				
NVQ level 3 completed	1	25	3	75	1	33				
Left without completing the framework	3	75	1	25	2	67			1	25

NVQ Training										
NVQ Training	1997-98		1998-99		1999-2000		2000-01		2001-02	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
	Number that started	13		12		8		3		5
Still in training	0	0	0	0	0	0	2	67	4	80
Individual learning plan completed	8	62	7	58	4	50	0	0	0	0
Left without completing individual learning plan	5	38	5	42	2	25	0	0	1	20
NVQ level 1 completed	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
NVQ level 2 completed	7	54	6	50	6	75	0	0	0	0
NVQ level 3 completed	1	8	2	17	0	0	0	0	0	0

STRENGTHS

- good support for learners in the workplace
- well-conducted and regular progress reviews
- effective planning of off-the-job training
- good range of evidence in portfolios

WEAKNESSES

- slow progress towards completion of modern apprenticeship framework
- little support for learners with additional needs

OTHER IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED

- more feedback after evaluations
- better retention and achievement rates
- better links between IT key skills and vocational training

6. Employers are well informed about the requirements of the NVQ training programme and give good levels of support to learners. This strength was identified in the self-assessment report. Each learner has a workplace mentor who offers training and guidance as well as supervision. For example, learners are asked to note any pest and disease problems at the nursery so that they can discuss them with their mentor. Learners receive an effective workplace induction, which is reinforced by a written assignment in which they describe their workplace and its operation. Employers plan the work of each learner with the association's training manager to ensure that they are involved in all aspects of the nursery's operation.

7. The subcontractor's training manager visits learners at work every 10 weeks, to review progress. The reviews include a discussion with the employer and the learner about performance and readiness for the next stage of assessment. Clear targets are set and recorded. Workplace assessment is well planned and is carried out by an assessor who is employed by the association. At each visit the assessor agrees the next assessment and prepares an assessment plan for the learner and the employer. Good feedback is given on written assignments. Internal verification is satisfactory.

8. Learners who are working towards a level 2 qualification, undertake a programme of off-the-job workshops for background knowledge. There are well-planned, half-day sessions on topics such as basic plant science and nutrition. Learners are asked to gather information about each topic from their workplace in the weeks before the session and the material is used for group discussion. Employers are also sent details of each off-the-job training session and are encouraged to assist their learners' preparation for it. Trainers are well qualified and follow lesson plans which have been regularly updated. Handout materials are good. The timing of the off-the-job training is arranged to minimise disruption for employers during seasonal peaks in the workload. Modern apprentices also attend a specialist training company in order to practice the computer skills needed for key skills. However, the training is not related to horticultural work. All the exercises are generic business studies examples, and they do not demonstrate the relevance of IT to the horticultural industry. All off-the-job training is evaluated using questionnaires given to learners and employers, and action is taken by the training manager when problems arise. However, the results of surveys and any action taken is not passed back to those who completed them.

9. The standard of work in learners' portfolios is good. Learners undertake a number of assignment projects for evidence of background knowledge. The projects are set alongside workplace supervisors so that they make full use of the opportunities in each

workplace. The assignments include photographs, other visual material and work diaries, which are checked at each progress review. Assessors give thorough feedback on each assignment, which is encouraging and supportive.

10. Most learners follow training programmes which lead to NVQs at levels 2 or 3. Results are satisfactory, with achievement rates between 50 and 75 per cent. Achievement of the full modern apprenticeship framework is poor. Few learners have completed their framework, although some have achieved the NVQ. Key skills for modern apprentices are an integral part of the horticultural programmes, except for IT which is delivered separately.

11. There is little support for learners with additional learning needs. A test for numeracy and communication skills is undertaken during induction but the results are not used to identify support needs. They are used to select the level of training which the learner can manage without formal support, or to reject their application. Most learners are enrolled on training programmes which lead to the NVQ only. Some learners with additional needs, receive good support from their workplaces and informally from assessors, but there is no mechanism for referring learners to additional training to improve their basic skills. This weakness was not identified in the self-assessment report.

Good Practice

Learners can visit other learners' places of work to observe a range of work methods and to share experiences. In this remote rural area, where learners find it difficult to attend off-the-job training, it allows additional support for the training process as well as an opportunity for learners to meet on a social basis.

Construction

Grade 4

Programmes inspected	Number of learners	Contributory grade
Work-based learning for young people	15	4

12. The ITeC offers work-based learning for young people under the modern apprenticeship framework, currently, for 15 learners. They are recruited by the ITeC, through the careers service or directly by employers. There are four advanced and 11 foundation modern apprentices. Learners are following a range of qualifications which are appropriate to their area of work. The advanced modern apprenticeship programme has one electrical installations learner and one carpentry and joinery learner. The foundation modern apprenticeship programme consists of nine plumbers, two bricklayers, one carpenter and joiner and one painting and decorating learner. All learners are working towards the level 2 NVQ and most elements are assessed in simulated conditions off the job. Along with key skills training and assessment, this is subcontracted to the local colleges where learners attend on a day-release basis. The self-assessment report did not identify the strengths and weaknesses and inspectors gave a lower grade than that given in the self-assessment report.

The following tables show the achievement and retention rates available up to the time of the inspection.

Work-based learning for young people										
Foundation modern apprenticeships (FMA)	1997-98		1998-99		1999-2000		2000-01		2001-02	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
	Number that started	1		1		3		7		8
Still in training	0	0	0	0	0	0	6	86	5	62
FMA framework completed	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
NVQ level 2 completed	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Left without completing the framework	1	100	1	100	3	100	1	14	3	38

Work-based learning for young people										
Advanced modern apprenticeships (AMA)	1997-98		1998-99		1999-2000		2000-01		2001-02	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
	Number that started	8		3		11		3		0
Still in training	0	0	0	0	4	36	0	0	0	0
AMA framework completed	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
NVQ level 2 completed	0	0	2	67	1	9	0	0	0	0
NVQ level 3 completed	0	0	0	0	1	9	0	0	0	0
Left without completing the framework	8	100	1	33	7	64	3	100	0	0

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NVQ Training										
NVQ Training	1997-98		1998-99		1999-2000		2000-01		2001-02	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
	Number that started	16		7				3		0
Still in training	0	0	0	0			0	0	0	0
Individual learning plan completed	3	19	1	14			1	33	0	0
Left without completing individual learning plan	13	81	6	86			2	67	0	0
NVQ level 1 completed	0	0	0	0			0	0	0	0
NVQ level 2 completed	3	19	1	14			1	33	0	0

STRENGTHS

- good training in the workplace
- good craft skills offered during off-the-job training

WEAKNESSES

- poor retention and achievement rates
- weak progress reviews
- insufficient work-based assessment
- poor understanding of assessment by employers
- poor co-ordination of on- and off-the-job training

OTHER IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED

- more sharing of good practice.

13. A good range of workplace training is available to learners. The company has established effective links with a number of local companies and property developers who represent a broad range of trade activities in the construction industry. Employers are supportive of training and ensure that learners are given good craft skills through training in the workplace. Additionally, learners are able to broaden their range of skills and experience through job rotation. Learners are encouraged to produce work to industrial standards.

14. Off-the-job training programmes are well planned and learners' progress is

effectively monitored during practical activities. From an early stage in their training most learners are given tasks which develop their craft skills. Employers recognise the relevance of the skills and learners are able to apply them in the workplace. Training opportunities in the workplace are good, but there is limited use of witness testimony to support learners' assessments. There are only two examples of learners using this type of evidence.

15. Retention rates are poor with all learners leaving early in the three years from 1997 to 2000. During the past year, there was some improvement with 17 per cent leaving early. In the current year, 38 per cent of foundation modern apprentices have left their programme early. There is slow progress towards achievement of the NVQs. Plumbers work in cramped conditions on the subcontractors' premises and, with large numbers, in the workshops, they often have to wait for tools and equipment. To date, there is no framework completion in foundation or advanced modern apprenticeships. It is anticipated that two learners will complete their advanced modern apprenticeship framework in the near future and that a foundation modern apprentice will complete by the end of the current term. This weakness was identified in the self-assessment report.

16. Progress reviews take place regularly and copies are kept in the learners' files. Neither learners nor employers are routinely given copies. Most progress reviews consist of information being given by the learner about recent tasks in the workplace, and they are recorded on the review sheet. The reviewer does not link the tasks to the NVQ units or to the work being carried out during off-the-job training. Performance is not analysed and progress is not recorded. Learners are not routinely given targets for the achievement of their NVQ units or activities to be undertaken between progress reviews. Construction staff do not share good practice with staff from other occupational areas.

17. There is insufficient assessment in the workplace. There is one example where the electrical installations subcontractor has assessed a learner in the workplace. All other assessments are simulated in the subcontractors' workshops. There are only two examples of assessment in the workplace in the plumbing sector.

18. Employers are committed to training and offer a good range of training opportunities. Employers receive an information pack which gives useful information, but many still have a poor understanding of the assessment requirements of the NVQ. Many employers are not aware that witness testimony can be used as part of the assessment process or that some work-based assessment is a requirement of the framework.

19. Off-the-job training is planned and college tutors monitor the learners' progress. However, co-ordination of on- and off-the-job training is poor. Although service level

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agreements are in place with subcontractors, the ITeC does not always see the external verifier reports. There is little evidence that progress reviews include any record of off-the-job activity. Employers have no information about off-the-job work programmes and no attempt is made to plan learners' work on the job, in relation to their college activities. Communication with employers is regular but contact does not lead to increased levels of involvement by employers or a clearer understanding of the requirements of the training programme.

Engineering, technology & manufacturing

Grade 3

Programmes inspected	Number of learners	Contributory grade
Work-based learning for young people	52	3

20. The ITeC offers work-based learning for young people employed in light and heavy motor vehicle maintenance, engineering, electrical installation, body repair and parts management. Forty of the 52 learners are following motor vehicle engineering programmes. Recruitment is promoted through local schools and the careers service but some learners are recruited directly by employers. Seven are following NVQ training and 45 are on modern apprenticeship programmes. All learners are employed in companies across the Boston and South Holland region, including manufacturing companies, large franchised car dealerships, small privately owned garages and body-repair shops. Thirty-eight per cent of the learners attend one of two local colleges for one day each week for off-the-job training. The remainder attend one of the four ITeC training centres, generally for one day every other week where the ITeC's staff carry out progress reviews and assessment in the workplace and in the training centre. They also review the progress of the college-based learners. College staff assess learners in the college and in the workplace when appropriate. Key skills are an integral part of the vocational training. The self-assessment report identified most of the strengths and weaknesses and inspectors gave the same grade as that given in the self-assessment report.

The following tables show the achievement and retention rates available up to the time of inspection.

Work-based learning for young people										
Foundation modern apprenticeships (FMA)	1997-98		1998-99		1999-2000		2000-01		2001-02	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
	Number that started					3		14		10
Still in training					0	0	7	50	10	100
FMA framework completed					0	0	0	0	0	0
NVQ level 2 completed					0	0	0	0	0	0
Left without completing the framework					3	100	7	50	0	0

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Work-based learning for young people										
Advanced modern apprenticeships (AMA)	1997-98		1998-99		1999-2000		2000-01		2001-02	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
	Number that started	12		6		10		20		8
Still in training	0	0	4	67	9	90	7	35	8	100
AMA framework completed	0	0	1	17	0	0	2	10	0	0
NVQ level 2 completed	2	17	2	33	1	10	6	30	0	0
NVQ level 3 completed	1	8	1	17	0	0	5	25	0	0
Left without completing the framework	12	100	1	17	1	10	13	65	0	0

NVQ Training										
NVQ Training	1997-98		1998-99		1999-2000		2000-01		2001-02	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
	Number that started	3		11		3		5		7
Still in training	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	7	100
Individual learning plan completed	0	0	2	18	0	0	1	20	0	0
Left without completing individual learning plan	3	100	9	82	3	100	4	80	0	0
NVQ level 1 completed	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
NVQ level 2 completed	0	0	2	18	0	0	0	0	0	0

STRENGTHS

- good on-the-job training
- effective progress reviews
- good frequent work-based assessment
- effective matching of learners to employers

WEAKNESSES

- some poor retention and achievement rates
- poor integration of on- and subcontracted off-the-job training
- poor knowledge of training programmes by employers

OTHER IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED

- more ownership of portfolios of evidence by learners

21. When learners start their employment, they begin by carrying out real work under instruction and close supervision, by skilled and experienced staff. While a mentor is nominated, other staff with particular specialist experience also offer training. Employers' staff are occupationally experienced and some have national awards. As learners gain skills, tasks are increasingly undertaken without supervision. Space, equipment and tools on the employers' premises are good and learners are encouraged to build up their own kit of small tools. There is good support from management. Learners are allowed a reasonable amount of time to work on portfolios and to attend progress reviews. An employer's handbook is given out which sets out the obligations and responsibilities of those involved in the training process. This strength was identified in the self-assessment report.

22. The learners on engineering programmes and eight of those on motor vehicle programmes, carry out their off-the-job training at one of two local colleges. The remaining 32 attend one of the four ITeC training centres. The training officer visits all of the training centres to minimise travel for learners. He visits them in the workplace every two weeks and is periodically accompanied by the internal verifier. The training officer is occupationally experienced and has qualifications in assessment and key skills. The visits alternate with attendance at a training centre so that there is close and regular contact with the ITeC's staff. The same form is used for progress reviews and assessments, which provides a good structure. The conclusion from the progress reviews and assessments are discussed with the learner and the employer and are signed by both. A copy is kept by the employer in the handbook. This process provides good control and co-ordination of on- and off-the-job training and ensures that learning is matched to achievement of the qualification.

23. There is a high level of workplace assessment for the motor vehicle learners who are based at the ITeC. The training officer's visits are planned ahead and the employer and learners are asked to arrange a work activity which is suitable for assessment. The training officer observes the learner and then asks questions to check understanding. He particularly checks on any reference material which is being used, such as employer's manuals and wall charts. The learner then receives feedback and can see how the evidence is used for the portfolio of evidence. The same task is observed on different occasions to ensure consistent performance and understanding over time.

24. The ITeC has a good employer database which is set up to monitor the suitability of employers. There are 36 employers offering training in motor vehicle engineering, covering a good geographical spread across the region. Few learners experience difficulties with travel as careful attention is given to matching them with local employment opportunities. The ITeC reacts speedily and effectively to approaches from employers or prospective learners. Many employers interview learners within a week of

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contacting the ITeC. The selection process is an integral part of the employers' recruitment process and all learners and employers are satisfied with the result. For those learners whose off-the-job training is fully managed by the ITeC, all practical training is carried out in the workplace. Background knowledge and key skills are taught at one of the ITeC training centres. They are well equipped with an office, training rooms, IT and other resources. Learners have an individualised training programme which is driven by the review and assessment process. During their weekly visits, a group of five or six will each be working on a personal training programme. For example, they may be using various workbooks or a CD-ROM which cover all aspects of motor vehicle technology. This is often supplemented by the use of multimedia resources in the workplace. Although most learners attend the training centre every other week, the frequency is adjusted to suit their individual needs and less frequent attendance may be agreed. Similarly, on-the-job training is tailored to suit their individual needs to ensure that the experience is varied and to avoid repetitive jobs. Subcontractor-based learners train alongside those from other training organisations and full-time students. Key skills are timetabled into the training. This significant strength was identified in the self-assessment report.

25. From 1997 to the current intake, there have been 29 starters on the NVQ training programme. This represents a quarter of the total number of starters for engineering. There are seven still in training and 19 have left without achieving the targets on their individual learning plan. For this group, the retention and achievement rates are poor. Retention and achievement on modern apprenticeship programmes are satisfactory.

26. There is poor co-ordination of on- and off-the-job training for the 38 per cent of learners who are attending colleges for off-the-job training. College staff do not visit the workplace unless there is a need for work-based assessment as part of the qualification. Employers who have college-based learners do not always understand the relevance of the visit, other than it is a requirement of the qualification. One employer identified that one aspect of the training provided at college is no longer used in industry. Employers are not invited to the college and they only see the staff during the infrequent assessments. Learners and employers are dissatisfied with the college provision. In some cases, they do not feel that the ITeC is offering an effective resolution to the problems they raise.

27. Many employers, particularly the larger companies, have a good understanding of modern apprenticeships and NVQs, but some of the smaller employers are generally less aware. They support their employees and want them to gain qualifications, but they do not understand how the on-the-job training contributes to the achievement of the qualification. Some of the employers remain unsure of the merits of the NVQ. In most of the portfolios, there is little use of varied evidence such as photographs to supplement the witness testimony, job cards and worksheets. Learners tend to be guided on what should be included rather than take personal responsibility for gathering the appropriate evidence. Many learners do not demonstrate ownership or pride in their portfolios and consequently do not always finish them.

Good Practice

During the summer period, three staff members took a group of motor vehicle learners to Derbyshire for a one-day orienteering course. It was available to all motor vehicle learners, but only five attended. The exercise was aimed at developing key skills in the planning of the day, in the orienteering and in subsequent reporting. It is intended to develop the course so that more learners attend.

Business administration, management & professional

Grade 2

Programmes inspected	Number of learners	Contributory grade
Work-based learning for young people	86	2

28. There are 86 learners on the business administration programmes. Fifteen are advanced modern apprentices in business administration and one is in accountancy. There are 28 foundation modern apprentices in administration and four in accountancy. The remaining 38 learners are following NVQ training. Nineteen of these are working towards an accountancy NVQ at levels 2, 3 and 4, 16 are working towards NVQs in business administration at levels 2 and 3, and three are working towards the IT NVQ at levels 2 and 3 and have been included in this occupational area. The ITeC is training a further 15 learners who are no longer eligible for LSC funding. Learners are recruited by the ITeC and directly by employers. They have an initial assessment and are then placed on an appropriate training programme. All learners are employed and spend most of their time at work, with limited amounts of time spent in the training centre. There is no structured off-the-job training. Key skills are an integral part of the vocational training. There are regular and frequent reviews of progress and assessment of competence. Internal verification is well organised and learners are aware of their assessors and internal verifiers. Retention and achievement rates have varied in recent years. Achievement of the framework for foundation modern apprentices is generally satisfactory and retention rates are good. The self-assessment did not identify all of the strengths and weaknesses. Inspectors gave the same grade as that given in the self-assessment.

The following tables show the achievement and retention rates available up to the time of inspection.

Work-based learning for young people										
Foundation modern apprenticeships (FMA)	1997-98		1998-99		1999-2000		2000-01		2001-02	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
	Number that started	2		9		7		17		21
Still in training	0	0	0	0	0	0	13	76	19	90
FMA framework completed	2	100	4	44	6	86	0	0	0	0
NVQ level 2 completed	0	0	0	0	2	29	0	0	0	0
Left without completing the framework	0	0	5	56	1	14	4	24	2	10

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Work-based learning for young people										
Advanced modern apprenticeships (AMA)	1997-98		1998-99		1999-2000		2000-01		2001-02	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
	Number that started	14		9		13		12		1
Still in training	0	0	0	0	5	38	10	83	1	100
AMA framework completed	9	64	5	56	0	0	0	0	0	0
NVQ level 2 completed	4	29	3	33	2	15	0	0	0	0
NVQ level 3 completed	10	71	5	56	0	0	0	0	0	0
Left without completing the framework	4	29	4	44	8	62	2	17	0	0

NVQ Training										
NVQ Training	1997-98		1998-99		1999-2000		2000-01		2001-02	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
	Number that started	124		129		112		40		18
Still in training	0	0	0	0	0	0	20	50	18	100
Individual learning plan completed	57	46	63	49	75	67	17	43	0	0
Left without completing individual learning plan	67	54	66	51	37	33	0	0	0	0
NVQ level 1 completed	13	10	16	12	21	19	5	12	0	0
NVQ level 2 completed	41	33	45	35	52	46	7	17	0	0
NVQ level 3 completed	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	5	0	0
NVQ level 4 completed	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0

STRENGTHS

- effective accreditation of prior achievement
- strong review and assessment procedures
- good achievement of additional qualifications
- well-planned and well-managed accountancy training
- highly motivated learners
- highly supportive employers

WEAKNESSES

- slow introduction of modern apprentice frameworks
- poorly co-ordinated on-the-job training

OTHER IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED

- better induction programme

29. Many administration and accountancy learners join the ITeC with a range of previously gained qualifications which are identified during the initial assessment process. Prior achievement is accredited to the learner and individual learning plans reflect this. This is particularly the case with key skills units, which are identified and accredited when appropriate. The need for additional units, or higher levels of existing units, is then identified and planned into learners' training programmes. They make good progress, relative to their prior achievement and potential, which are accurately identified at induction. The self-assessment report did not identify this strength. The company has recently revised and improved its induction programme and this is identified as a strength in the self-assessment report. However, not all of the elements of the new one-day procedure have been put in place.

30. Training officers oversee the learners' training programme of work and they are responsible for reviewing progress and assessing portfolio evidence. Some learners see their training officer for advice and assessment every two weeks. The ITeC uses a combined assessment and progress review form which allows staff to either carry out the formal review or to assess NVQ product evidence and set targets for further work. This process is effective. During formal reviews, the report form is signed and agreed by the employer, the learner and the reviewer and they all have a copy. The timing and comprehensive detail of assessment feedback motivate learners. Many are able to negotiate their own workloads to reflect their personal and employment pressures and they influence their own learning. They are confident, fully aware of their progress and know how to make improvements. Assessors and verifiers meet every month and the details are minuted. Comprehensive records of assessment decisions are maintained. Learners are aware of the assessment and verification process and in many cases know their assessors and verifier by name. Unit-based assessment is carried out when possible. This strength was identified in the self-assessment report.

31. The ITeC offers a range of additional qualifications. As a result, many administration and accountancy learners achieve single subject qualifications and other certificates such as basic and second stage IT. These additional qualifications make the training programmes individual and are a notable benefit to the learners and their employers.

32. The learners in accountancy use a nationally produced open learning pack and have a named tutor for support. There are nationally scheduled assessments which are supplemented by local assessment and practice events. As a result learners have clear targets to meet. Their progress is hindered by the dates of national assessments and if they miss a dated assessment, they can fall behind with their studies. The ITeC's staff offer a comprehensive, relevant and effective support service. Many accountancy learners progress through all three levels of the award.

33. Learners in all training programmes are motivated and proceed as planned through their assessment timetable. This strength was identified in the self-assessment report. When problems arise, the ITeC's programme manager deals with them immediately. As a result, many learners achieve their goals in the minimum time possible. Standards of work are high. For accountancy learners, the potential disadvantage of open learning has been helped by the ITeC's organisation and control of the accountancy training programme. All learners can use the ITeC's well-equipped training centres.

34. All learners and employers are enthusiastic about the quality of training and level of service given by the ITeC. Its staff promote good working relationships between learners and employers. Many employers have long-term business relationships with the ITeC and consider it to be the training provider of choice. Learners are often referred to the ITeC by personal recommendation. Its reputation among employers is good and its range of services are valued within the business community.

35. A large proportion of the learners are on NVQ training programmes and this has slowed down the introduction of the modern apprenticeship framework. The ITeC feels that the NVQ training offers a better training programme for lower ability learners, but this does not allow them to develop key skills. Many learners subsequently progress on to modern apprenticeship programmes and gain the benefits of key skills. The organisation is currently developing a basic and key skills building initiative which will assess key skills ability and offer remedial learning materials before assessment.

36. Work-based training opportunities are good but there is no use of training schedules. Employers are keen to assist learners and many are offering assistance to the best of their ability. The regular assessors or reviewers' visits generally reduce the shortcomings caused by the poor co-ordination of work-based training and NVQ assessment. There is little, if any, structured off-the-job training for learners. They are able to visit the ITeC's training centres for advice and assessment and to use the IT facilities, but there is limited formal training.

Good Practice

All employers are given a toolkit which contains details of learners' programmes of study, important and helpful information for the employer and storage space for review and assessment forms. The toolkit is kept in the workplace where it is available to the learner and the employer.

Retailing, customer service & transportation

Grade 3

Programmes inspected	Number of learners	Contributory grade
Work-based learning for young people	36	3

37. There are 36 learners in retailing and customer service. Twelve are working towards the retailing NVO at levels 1 and 2 and the remainder are working towards the customer service NVO at levels 2 and 3. There are 13 foundation modern apprentices and three advanced modern apprentices. Twenty learners are following the NVO training programme. The ITeC is not being funded for a further seven learners who are working towards the targets on their individual learning plans. All learners are assessed in the workplace by assessors from the ITeC. Those in retailing attend for off-the-job training for half a day every two weeks at one of the ITeC’s training centres. Learners in customer service do not attend off-the-job training as their assessment and progress reviews take place in the workplace every two weeks. All learners are in full time employment and are recruited directly by employers, through the ITeC or the careers service. Induction is carried out in the workplace and at the ITeC’s training centres. A wide range of employers are used across the Boston and South Holland region. Key skills training and assessment are an integral part of the vocational training. Many learners start training in this occupational area before moving into another occupational area at a later stage. The self-assessment report identified the strengths and weaknesses and inspectors gave the same grade as that given in the self-assessment report.

The following tables show the achievement and retention rates available up to the time of inspection.

Work-based learning for young people										
Foundation modern apprenticeships (FMA)	1997-98		1998-99		1999-2000		2000-01		2001-02	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
	Number that started			5		7		14		5
Still in training			0	0	0	0	8	57	5	100
FMA framework completed			1	20	1	14	1	7	0	0
NVO level 2 completed			1	20	4	57	2	14	0	0
Left without completing the framework			4	80	6	86	6	43	0	0

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Work-based learning for young people										
Advanced modern apprenticeships (AMA)	1997-98		1998-99		1999-2000		2000-01		2001-02	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
	Number that started	2		3		8		6		1
Still in training	0	0	0	0	1	12	1	17	1	100
AMA framework completed	0	0	1	33	1	12	0	0	0	0
NVQ level 2 completed	0	0	1	33	2	25	0	0	0	0
NVQ level 3 completed	0	0	1	33	2	25	0	0	0	0
Left without completing the framework	2	100	1	33	6	75	5	83	0	0

NVQ Training										
NVQ Training	1997-98		1998-99		1999-2000		2000-01		2001-02	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
	Number that started	25		31		58		85		9
Still in training	0	0	0	0	0	0	11	13	9	100
Individual learning plan completed	23	92	21	68	38	66	26	31	0	0
Left without completing individual learning plan	2	8	10	32	20	34	38	45	0	0
NVQ level 1 completed	1	4	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
NVQ level 2 completed	18	72	21	68	38	66	26	31	0	0
NVQ level 3 completed	4	16	0	0	3	5	0	0	0	0

STRENGTHS

- good assessment practices
- effective involvement in progress reviews by employers
- good achievement of NVQs
- learners well-matched to placements

WEAKNESSES

- slow progress for retail learners
- poor retention rates for modern apprentices
- lack of off-the-job training for learners in customer service

OTHER IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED

- better internal verification

38. Assessment practices are good. All assessment takes place in the workplace with direct observation by the ITeC's assessors, by oral questioning, work-based projects and portfolio reviews. Assessment is well planned, involves all parties and takes place every two weeks. There is good communication as to what will be assessed and how. Feedback after assessment is detailed and of a consistently good standard. Learners know how well they have done and what they need to do in preparation for the next assessment. All documents are completed to a good standard and portfolios contain a good range of diverse evidence. Internal verification is satisfactory but it does not involve all parties in the feedback. Learners understand the internal verification process.

39. Employers are fully involved in the progress review process which takes place regularly and is combined with the assessment process. Employers are given a toolkit which includes a good range of information which relates to the training programme and includes a place to store review forms. Employers are part of the review process and take responsibility for progressing the agreed action. Learners benefit from this good level of commitment from their employers and supervisors.

40. Achievement of NVQs is good. Most learners are following the NVQ training programme and the overall achievement rate exceeds 65 per cent. Many of the learners achieve the customer service NVQ before moving on to an advanced modern apprenticeship, either within the same area of learning or another which is closely related. On most training programmes, retention rates are satisfactory, although the figures look low as a result of learners transferring to other programmes before they achieve the targets on the original individual learning plan. The completion rates of modern apprenticeship frameworks remains consistently low, although there are recent signs of improvement. Initiatives to make key skills an integral part of the vocational training are taking place but it is too early to identify whether they will improve the completion rates of the modern apprenticeship frameworks.

41. Learners are well matched to work placements. There is a good range of placements which give learners a high level of responsibility at work. Placements are well chosen and all offer good resources and facilities, good opportunities for learners to progress and strong commitment from staff. One customer service learner is working at a motor vehicle dealership and is selling prestige cars, another is placed at the offices of the local newspaper. Retail learners are employed with a good range of high street stores which allows them to develop a high level of employability skills and many stay with the same employer after they have finished their training. Careful attention is given to placing learners with an employer who is close to their home. This is important in a remote rural area such as Boston and South Holland where public transport links are poor.

42. Progress is slow with many learners taking between 18 months and two years to achieve the NVQ. In the past, the ITeC has made a conscious decision to use training in the customer service and retailing occupational area, to support and motivate learners who have recently left school. This approach was accepted by the local funding agency and has been successful in promoting achievement for those learners who are likely to drop out of training. The slow pace is useful for some learners but those who are more capable are not being challenged and moved through the assessment and training process quickly enough. The progress of learners in retailing is slower than those who are working towards the customer service NVQ.

43. The retention rate for modern apprentices is low. Until recently, most learners have been placed on NVQ training programmes, but as the proportion of modern apprentices increases, the impact of low retention rates is becoming more significant. For foundation modern apprentices, the proportion of those leaving the training programme early has improved, but it remains at 43 per cent for 2000-01. For advanced modern apprentices, where the numbers are very low, the retention rate is consistently high and in excess of 75 per cent. Improvements to the initial assessment process have been introduced and the ITeC is now able to prepare a more appropriate individual learning plan.

44. Some learners in customer service do not attend off-the-job training. In one case, the pressures of the learner's job is such that she will never be in a position to attend. Some employers do not see the value of off-the-job training and do not make allowances for it in the work schedules. Those learners who are working towards an NVQ in retailing have adequate off-the-job training in one of the ITeC's training centres where resources are good and staff have suitable qualifications and experience to support them.

Hospitality, sport, leisure & travel

Grade 4

Programmes inspected	Number of learners	Contributory grade
Work-based learning for young people	6	4

45. The learners in hospitality were transferred from another training provider during the past year and there are no plans to recruit further learners into this occupational area. All learners are employed in restaurants in the Boston and South Holland area. There are three advanced modern apprentices, one foundation modern apprentice and two other work-based learners following NVQ training. Three are working towards the NVQ at level 3 and the others are working towards the NVQ at level 2. Four learners are scheduled to work towards key skills. Training and assessment of NVQs and key skills is subcontracted to a local further education college. The qualifications are in food preparation and cooking NVQ at levels 2 and 3. All training and assessment is college-based and is carried out by three staff in two colleges. All learners attend college for one day each week for their training and assessment. The self-assessment report identified strengths but did not identify any weaknesses. Inspectors gave a lower grade than that given in the self-assessment report.

The following tables show the achievement and retention rates available up to the time of inspection.

Work-based learning for young people										
Foundation modern apprenticeships (FMA)	1997-98		1998-99		1999-2000		2000-01		2001-02	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
	Number that started					1		1		0
Still in training					0	0	1	100	0	0
FMA framework completed					0	0	0	0	0	0
NVQ level 2 completed					1	100	0	0	0	0
Left without completing the framework					1	100	0	0	0	0

Work-based learning for young people										
Advanced modern apprenticeships (AMA)	1997-98		1998-99		1999-2000		2000-01		2001-02	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
	Number that started	1		1				5		0
Still in training	0	0	0	0			3	60	0	0
AMA framework completed	0	0	0	0			0	0	0	0
NVQ level 2 completed	1	100	0	0			0	0	0	0
NVQ level 3 completed	1	100	0	0			1	20	0	0
Left without completing the framework	1	100	1	100			2	40	0	0

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NVQ Training										
NVQ Training										
	1997-98		1998-99		1999-2000		2000-01		2001-02	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Number that started							6		0	
Still in training							2	33	0	0
Individual learning plan completed							0	0	0	0
Left without completing individual learning plan							4	67	0	0
NVQ level 1 completed							0	0	0	0
NVQ level 2 completed							1	17	0	0

STRENGTHS

- good off-the-job training
- highly supportive employers
- regular progress reviews

WEAKNESSES

- no work-based assessments
- slow progress towards qualifications
- poor co-ordination between on- and off-the-job training
- inaccurate individual learning plans

OTHER IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED

- better feedback after assessments

46. Learners in hospitality have good off-the-job training at a local college. It is well planned and schemes of work are individualised to meet the needs of each learner. Training and assessment plans are prepared up to four weeks in advance which allows learners to prepare for the off-the-job training day. Feedback is not formally recorded after assessment and learners are unsure of the assessment outcome and any other work they need to complete.

47. The training officer who is responsible for hospitality has developed good working relationships with employers and maintains regular contact. Reviews are carried out on

a regular basis and they involve the learner, the supervisors and a member of staff from the ITeC. This level of individual support is helping learners to achieve the targets on their individual learning plan. Employers are given an employer's toolkit where they keep information on the training programme, progression, the ITeC's policies, individual learning plans, key contact details and the employers' agreement.

48. Employers are very supportive of their learners and demonstrate a strong interest in the training programme and their learners' progress. Most workplaces offer very good opportunities for assessment but they are not being used. Some employers have offered to qualify as work-based assessors but this offer has not been taken up. One employer is a lecturer with an appropriate teaching qualification. In some cases, the menu at the workplace is changed to allow the learners to practice their skills before being assessed.

49. No assessments are carried out in the workplace. Learners are involved in a wide range of practical activities at work which could be used for NVQ assessment, but no observations of performance take place. Testimonies are not routinely requested from employers. There is excessive reliance upon assessment through simulation in the kitchens of the subcontractor.

50. There is slow progress. Learners are mostly behind the dates for achievement of targets on their individual learning plans. The ITeC is not entirely responsible for this as learners have recently been transferred from another training provider. The ITeC has been slow in dealing with the updating of initial assessments and individual learning plans which reflect the learners recent change of circumstances. Slow progress remained a weakness as recent initiatives have had little impact. There was evidence of learners being kept on to finish their training even when the funding had stopped. Inspectors have made no judgement on retention rates due to the low numbers and the relatively short time that learners have been with the ITeC. Key skills were introduced recently and are now an integral part of the off-the-job training and assessment. There has been no achievement of key skills to date.

51. There is a subcontractor's agreement in place but the quality of training and assessment has not been monitored by the ITeC. There is little effective co-ordination of the work which is being carried out at the colleges in relation to that at the ITeC. This weakness was identified in the self-assessment report. The college does not routinely keep employers and training officers fully informed about the levels of achievement and progress being made. There is evidence to show that these problems have been identified and plans are in place to manage them. There is a meeting structure in place for regular reviews between the college and the ITeC's staff, and an audit schedule for the monitoring of subcontractors.

52. Individual learning plans do not cover the requirements of the modern apprenticeship. Over the past year, the ITeC transferred several learners from another training provider at the request of the local training and enterprise council (TEC). At the time of the transfer, learners did not have their initial assessments reviewed. There was

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an over reliance on the original initial assessment and individual learning plans which had been agreed by the original training provider. The training officers who are now responsible for monitoring the learners, are not experienced in the occupational area and are not aware of the full framework requirements.

Hairdressing & beauty therapy

Grade 4

Programmes inspected	Number of learners	Contributory grade
Work-based learning for young people	42	4

53. Work-based learning in hairdressing is offered through two subcontractors, who are based in Stamford and Spalding. The subcontractor in Spalding is a commercial salon which has a training school. There are 42 learners who are employed in salons across south Lincolnshire. There are 17 foundation modern apprentices working towards a level 2 NVQ and 24 are on NVQ training only. One advanced modern apprentice is working towards an NVQ at level 3. Learners are recruited directly by the ITeC or by referral from the hairdressing salons. Initial assessment of basic and key skills is carried out at the beginning of the training programme. Learners have an induction which includes health and safety and equal opportunities. An induction into hairdressing is carried out by the subcontractors and covers the structure of the NVQ and assessment procedures. Off-the-job training is carried out on one day each week, for a minimum of 36 weeks a year, and takes place with the subcontractors. It includes background knowledge and technical skills training. Most of the theory and key skills are covered during the first year of training and the second year focuses on practical skills development and assessment. Many learners have specific training sessions in their salons to practice their skills with clients. Hairdressing tutors are experienced and have the appropriate assessor and verifier qualifications. One hairdressing tutor also has a key skills qualification. Learners' progress is reviewed at least every 13 weeks in the workplace by a monitoring officer from the ITeC and employers and learners are involved in the review process. Tutors from the subcontractors also visit some learners in the workplace to carry out assessments. The self-assessment report identified strengths, but significant weaknesses were not identified. A lower grade was given than that shown in the self-assessment report.

The following tables show the achievement and retention rates available up to the time of inspection.

Work-based learning for young people										
Foundation modern apprenticeships (FMA)	1997-98		1998-99		1999-2000		2000-01		2001-02	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
	Number that started					1		11		14
Still in training					0	0	3	27	14	100
FMA framework completed					0	0	0	0	0	0
NVQ level 2 completed					0	0	0	0	0	0
Left without completing the framework					0	0	9	82	0	0

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Work-based learning for young people										
Advanced modern apprenticeships (AMA)	1997-98		1998-99		1999-2000		2000-01		2001-02	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
	Number that started			1				2		0
Still in training			0	0			1	50	0	0
AMA framework completed			0	0			0	0	0	0
NVQ level 2 completed			0	0			0	0	0	0
NVQ level 3 completed			0	0			0	0	0	0
Left without completing the framework			1	100			1	50	0	0

NVQ Training										
NVQ Training	1997-98		1998-99		1999-2000		2000-01		2001-02	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
	Number that started	15		11		8		19		16
Still in training	0	0	0	0	0	0	8	42	16	100
Individual learning plan completed	1	7	1	9	4	50	1	5	0	0
Left without completing individual learning plan	14	93	8	73	2	25	10	53	0	0
NVQ level 1 completed	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
NVQ level 2 completed	2	13	1	9	4	50	1	5	0	0

STRENGTHS

- good off-the-job practical skills training
- good range of work placements
- effective integration of key skills with vocational training

WEAKNESSES

- poor achievement of NVQs
- poor retention rates
- lack of diverse work-based evidence in portfolios
- poor co-ordination of on- and off-the-job training

OTHER IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED

- more effective progress reviews
- better learning support materials

54. Off-the-job training takes place in well-equipped salons with a good range of resources. Technology is used through a computerised reception system and the use of a digital camera to record the assessment evidence. Training is well planned with clearly identified activities which include a trip to a trade exhibition, manufacturers' courses and competition work. One learner gained second place at a national hairdressing competition. Learners have the opportunity to work on a range of clients and carry out a variety of hairdressing services to a good standard. Tutors demonstrate a high level of technical knowledge and good commercial techniques. Learners are aware of health, safety and hygiene and protective clothing is being used for chemical services. At one of the subcontractors, the learning materials for background knowledge are poor. All learners have their own tools and equipment and abide by the dress code. Learners speak highly of their tutors and the support they receive. The self-assessment report identified the quality of education and training as a strength.

55. Learners are placed at salons which are in convenient geographical locations. Effective support is given and very few learners change salons during their training. For example, one learner has stayed with the same salon and is now a senior stylist. Salons are well resourced and have a good range of equipment and products. Learners can gain specialist product training through manufacturers visiting their salons. Many salons have a training session where learners can practice their skills on clients. Two of the salons effectively record the practical work which is carried out on clients by their learners. On-the-job training in the salons and access to models in the workplace was identified as a strength in the self-assessment report.

56. Specific key skills sessions are held every week as part of the off-the-job training at one subcontractor. Diagnostic testing is used effectively to identify areas where the learners may need support, and any relevant previous qualifications they may have. Assessment of key skills is an integral part of the hairdressing programme. Assignments are well focused on hairdressing tasks, such as an IT assignment which covers research and publicity for a health day at a salon. Key skills are taught by a hairdressing tutor who has a key skills qualification. The same tutor is working to gain a practitioners' award. Learners demonstrate a sound awareness of key skills and give examples of their application in hairdressing. This was an additional strength which was not included in the self-assessment report.

57. Achievement of NVQs ranges from 13 per cent in 1997-98 to 50 per cent in 1999-2000. All foundation modern apprentices who started in 2000-01 are still in training with no full achievement of the framework to date. The achievement rates are below those quoted in the self-assessment report and this was not identified as a weakness. In September 2000, the ITeC changed to a new subcontractor for the hairdressing off-the-

job training and also in the same year took over a hairdressing contract from another training provider.

58. Retention rates on NVQ training and foundation modern apprenticeships are low. The proportion of leavers from the NVQ training without qualifications was 93 per cent in 1997-98, but it fell to 25 per cent in 1999-2000. For 2000-01, only eight of the 19 starters are still in training. The foundation modern apprenticeship also shows poor retention rates, with only 27 per cent of those who started in 2000-01 still in training. The low retention rates were not identified as a weakness in the self-assessment report.

59. Some salons have qualified assessors, but they are not fully involved in the assessments. One of the subcontractors has successfully piloted a scheme with a group of employers where a tutor is carrying out some of the assessments in the salons. The other subcontractor has carried out some assessment in the workplace through a visiting tutor and by utilising the salon-based assessors. The ITeC has recently employed a monitoring officer, who has hairdressing and assessment experience, to increase the amount of assessment in the salons. The poor use of assessment evidence from the workplace was identified in the self-assessment report. The assessment and internal verification processes are satisfactory. Learners are working on clients in the salons as part of their training, but this evidence is not used for their NVQ. Assessment portfolios contain a limited range of evidence with little use of diverse evidence such as photographs, witness testimonies or work diaries. Learners have limited access to their logbooks which are stored at the subcontractors' premises.

60. Learners have good opportunities for on- and off-the-job training. One subcontractor has designed the training programme to meet employers needs by starting with a range of relevant commercial skills. This enables the learner to become a productive member of their salon team. However, employers are not fully informed of the training schedule in advance to assist them in their planning of on-the-job training. The other subcontractor has a detailed annual schedule of theory and practical training which is circulated to employers. Progress reviews are carried out and include the employer and the learners. Informal feedback on the learners' progress is given to the employer although they do not receive regular formal feedback from the off-the-job training providers. Action plans which are produced during the progress reviews are not specifically focused on the NVQ assessments in many cases. Neither subcontractor holds employers meetings, but work-based assessors are encouraged to attend assessor and verification meetings with one of the subcontractors.

Health, social care & public services

Grade 3

Programmes inspected	Number of learners	Contributory grade
Work-based learning for young people	10	3

61. The ITeC offers foundation and advanced modern apprenticeships and NVQ training in early years care and education. All learners are working towards an NVQ in early years care and education at levels 2 and 3 and key skills when appropriate. There are 10 learners. Three are advanced modern apprentices, five are foundation modern apprentices and two are on NVQ training. There is one member of staff who is a trainer and assessor and who also visits workplaces to review learners' progress. Most learners are referred by their employer and all those who apply are interviewed. Nine learners work in day nurseries and one works in a residential respite care unit for children. All workplaces are checked by the ITeC's health and safety officer. Learners may join the programme at any time during the year. Learners are expected to complete the advanced modern apprentice framework in two years. Off-the-job training takes place at an ITeC training centre in Bourne. Key skills training is offered on one evening every two weeks. All learners have the opportunity to attend off-the-job training for the NVQ each month. All assessment takes place in the workplace by an ITeC trainer and assessor. The self-assessment report identified some strengths, although inspectors were able to identify further strengths and weaknesses. Inspectors awarded the same grade as that given in the self-assessment report.

The following tables show the achievement and retention rates available up to the time of inspection.

Work-based learning for young people										
Foundation modern apprenticeships (FMA)	1997-98		1998-99		1999-2000		2000-01		2001-02	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
	Number that started							2		3
Still in training							2	100	3	100
FMA framework completed							0	0	0	0
NVQ level 2 completed							0	0	0	0
Left without completing the framework							0	0	0	0

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Work-based learning for young people										
Advanced modern apprenticeships (AMA)	1997-98		1998-99		1999-2000		2000-01		2001-02	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
	Number that started							6		0
Still in training							3	50	0	0
AMA framework completed							0	0	0	0
NVQ level 2 completed							0	0	0	0
NVQ level 3 completed							0	0	0	0
Left without completing the framework							3	50	0	0

NVQ Training										
NVQ Training	1997-98		1998-99		1999-2000		2000-01		2001-02	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
	Number that started									2
Still in training									2	100
Individual learning plan completed										
Left without completing individual learning plan										
NVQ level 1 completed										
NVQ level 2 completed										

STRENGTHS

- good support in the workplace
- well-motivated and enthusiastic learners

WEAKNESSES

- slow progress towards NVQs
- no accreditation of prior achievements

OTHER IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED

- more streamlined assessment
- better understanding of training and assessment by employers
- better retention and achievement rates
- better initial assessment

62. Employers give learners good support at work. Thorough workplace induction takes place at the start of their training and they are given good practical training in well-equipped workplaces. All learners have one-to-one training from a qualified member of staff in their place of work and supervision continues throughout their training. Learners are encouraged to participate in planning creative activities and outings for the children which gives assessment evidence for the NVQ and key skills. Most employers arrange the duty rota so that learners can attend key skills training during the working day. Employers give learners time to complete their written work for the NVQ during work time and most learners have a mentor at work throughout their training. The ITeC's trainer and assessor visits the workplaces each week to give additional support and to carry out assessments. Progress reviews are carried out every 12 weeks and supervisors contribute. They are thorough and include plans for activities to be carried out in the workplace. The ITeC's trainer and assessor gives one-to-one training in the workplace. Learners are given the opportunity to attend additional training sessions at a local college. When travel is difficult for learners in remote rural locations, the visits by the ITeC's staff are highly valued by the employer and individual learners. This strength was identified in the self-assessment report.

63. Learners are well motivated, enthusiastic and confident in their work with children. Some have left higher education courses to follow a career with children. They are independent learners, they research all aspects of child development and are committed to childcare. Advanced modern apprentices have identified how their daily activities give evidence for the assessment of key skills and have demonstrated their competence well. In one case, a learner arranged an outing for the children. She prepared letters to parents, identified the costs and staff required and presented a report of the activity to two of the ITeC's staff.

64. One year ago, the ITeC took responsibility for eight early years learners from a further education college. Fifty per cent of the advanced modern apprentices have left the programme with no qualifications, but all of the foundation modern apprentices and those on NVQ training, remain on their learning programme. The ITeC has recently started to recruit new childcare learners and two have joined the programme recently. There has been no achievement during this period. Since the learners have only been with the ITeC for one year, inspectors have reached no overall judgements about retention and achievement rates, other than the need to improve.

65. Progress with the assessment of the NVQ is slow, but this was not identified in the

self-assessment report. One advanced modern apprentice has been on the programme since March 2000 and another since September 2000. Both have only achieved two units of the NVQ. Learners have been observed many times in the workplace and this was identified as a strength in the self-assessment report. One learner has in excess of 50 observations recorded. The assessor visits the workplace frequently and records detailed observations and although they give evidence for many units, few NVQ units have been achieved. Some managers are not aware of the training sessions for the level 2. None of the workplace supervisors has a timetable for these sessions and do not arrange duty rotas so that learners may attend. This has stopped learners from finishing their background knowledge and has compounded the slow progress. There are no streamlined assessment methods and employers do not understand the training and assessment in full. Internal verification is satisfactory.

66. Two learners have achieved previous training awards which include key skills, but they have not been accredited with this prior achievement. This further slows learners progress and achievement of the targets on their individual learning plans.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

Grade 3

67. The ITeC's chief executive reports to the council of management who oversees the overall direction of the company. Managers of training, quality assurance, marketing, administration and recruitment are responsible for the work of 32 members of staff. Not all staff are directly involved with work-based learning for young people, as a significant part of the ITeC's work is with adults and private commercial activities. There are strong lines of staff supervision and senior staff are responsible for health and safety, co-ordinating training and equal opportunities. Staff are located in ITeC premises in the towns of Boston, Bourne, Grantham, Stamford and Spalding. There are comprehensive policies and procedures which relate to quality assurance and equal opportunities. The self-assessment process has been established since 1998 when the ITeC was involved with the piloting of external inspection. An annual cycle of self-assessment is in place and the latest was produced in the summer of 2001. The ITeC's current self-assessment report relates to the 'Common Inspection Framework'.

STRENGTHS

- effective management of non-subcontracted training
- good understanding of quality assurance procedures by staff
- good management information system
- effective staff appraisal and development system
- good range of initiatives to widen participation in training

WEAKNESSES

- poor management of subcontractors
- insufficient target-setting
- limited understanding of equal opportunities by learners
- insufficient evaluation of training

OTHER IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED

- clearer strategy for the development of key skills
- better dissemination of external verifiers' reports

68. Training which is directly managed by the ITeC is managed effectively. The self-assessment report identified that there is a clearly defined management structure which effectively manages the range of provision spread over a wide rural area, including a number of training centres. Roles and responsibilities are clearly defined and communication is effective. Staff operate standard procedures which ensure that learners receive prompt and efficient service. The company's marketing of its training and recruitment services is well planned, and the management of its relationship with employers enables the company to offer a wide range of good-quality work placements

to potential learners.

69. There is an effective appraisal and development system for staff. They are reviewed each year and targets are set, which the member of staff and the line manager review in advance of the appraisal meeting. Performance is discussed and new targets are set which are appropriate to each job role. For example, senior staff are given targets such as the development of key skills and better initial assessment, while those in a more junior position are given targets for assessment, verification and IT. Staff take part in a broad range of training which is appropriate to their job role, including training and assessment qualifications, counselling and the support of those with English as a second language. A new member of staff who had previously operated lift trucks is working towards a qualification which will allow him to assess learners in this subject. Staff training is well recorded and it is clear that its aim is to provide staff with the best qualifications to support their learners.

70. The management of subcontractors is poor and this affects approximately 25 per cent of all learners. The organisation does not gather sufficient information on the performance of subcontractors to effectively judge the quality of their training. There are no formal reviews of the training and they do not collect external verifiers reports from subcontractors or the views of learners. Some learners are having problems with their training provider, but the ITeC is not taking effective action to deal with this. For example, one learner had received contradictory advice about the level and timing of a key skills test and review visits have failed to sort out this problem with the college concerned. There have recently been improvements in the links with subcontracting organisations, for example, through the introduction of a new contract, which allows the ITeC's staff to observe the training given to learners. This new development has not had time to affect the experience of learners as yet. Weaknesses in the management of subcontractors were not identified in the self-assessment report.

71. In the past, strategic planning has been limited to once a year, but this year the chief executive and management team has worked with the governing council to produce a five-year business plan. Managers have consulted with the staff, and they have a good understanding of the strategic aims adopted. An effort has been made in recent months to improve internal communications, for example, by circulating minutes of management meetings to all staff.

72. Regular and accurate reports from the computer-based management information system are available to managers. There are procedures to ensure that data are carefully checked before it is entered on the system. Staff in each training centre update their records each month and regular reports are produced and considered at management team meetings. Learners' progress reviews are monitored and staff are given a list each week which shows which learners need visiting during the next two weeks. A great deal of attention is given to recruitment and achievement statistics. The quality assurance manager produces a comprehensive range of reports which analyse data. Records of performance cover several years and show the way in which data collection and analysis have developed over time. However, they are not in a format which easily allows the

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reporting of progression and achievement. A new management system is currently being considered. The progress of individual learners is not monitored until they have achieved their qualification. Managers set realistic targets for recruitment through discussion with staff in the various training centres. However, targets are not set for improvement in retention rates of learners, employment after training, or employer satisfaction.

Equality of opportunity**Contributory grade 2**

73. The ITeC has identified under-represented groups in the community and has taken action to encourage their participation in training. It offers taster courses for young people in most occupational areas and it has distributed promotional literature in shops and take-away food outlets. Promotional material is regularly updated and uses images which do not stereotype. The ITeC's flexible approach to training allows people with other commitments, such as single mothers, to attend training sessions which lead to qualifications. The ITeC operates in a remote rural area with poor transport links, but the four training centres allow the learners to attend as close to their home as is practical. Placements are very carefully chosen so that learners are not disadvantaged by the need to travel long distances. There are good links with schools, including a girls' grammar school, and the organisation takes every opportunity to promote their training to students and parents.

74. The ITeC's marketing section makes good use of external communication networks and has a thorough understanding of areas of expansion and contraction in the local economy. It is part of a joint initiative to raise the awareness of work-based learning in the area and nationally. It has identified that a number of immigrants are entering the county and staff are gaining the appropriate qualifications to support this minority group. There are currently two learners from minority ethnic groups. At less than 1 per cent of all learners, this is representative of the local community. Male learners represent 44 per cent of all learners and while there is some evidence of the challenging of stereotypes, such as a female motor vehicle mechanic, most learners are following stereotypical programmes. Ten per cent of learners have declared a disability, which is a high proportion. Access for learners with restricted mobility is satisfactory. An equal opportunities co-ordinator runs a committee which meets twice a year and has members from all levels of the organisation. The co-ordinator is involved with an external group of other training providers.

75. Learners have a limited understanding equal opportunities. At induction, all learners watch and discuss a training video which relates to the main aspects of equality of opportunity. This has not been further developed or reinforced sufficiently to ensure learners fully understand their rights and responsibilities, particularly in their workplace. The employers' understanding of equal opportunities is limited, although they offer a good level of support and care for learners. Few learners can recall receiving any information about equal opportunities except that received during their induction. The ongoing monitoring of equal opportunities does not take place formally. Policies and procedures on equal opportunities, harassment, bullying, complaints and grievance are adequate but are not sufficiently reinforced with learners and employers.

76. In the past, the ITeC has placed a large proportion of learners in NVO training programmes and this has slowed down the introduction of the modern apprenticeship frameworks. The ITeC feels that the NVO training is a better training programme for lower ability candidates and was supported by the funding agency. However, this does not allow the development and assessment of key skills. There is no clear strategy for the development of key skills to ensure that all learners, regardless of their ability, can benefit.

Quality assurance

Contributory grade 3

77. The ITeC has well-established procedures which cover all stages of the training process. They are concise and well written and are understood by staff. The induction for new staff includes the assurance of quality. The policies and procedures are regularly reviewed and updated and the last full update was carried out in July 2001, with additional amendments since. Recently, a full audit of the quality assurance procedures was carried out involving all staff through questionnaires. The results have not been analysed as yet. The quality assurance manual is a controlled document with numbered amendments and staff sign to say they have received them. This ensures that all manuals remain up to date. Staff demonstrate good levels of compliance.

78. Views of learners and employers are not sought during the training process, although exit questionnaires are used when the learners leave the training programme. Various aspects of training are monitored. For example, observation of teaching has started in two of the occupational areas and quality assurance meetings have been introduced in motor vehicle training. There are no formal measures to evaluate the work which is carried out by subcontractors. Staff from the marketing department undertake independent reviews of each workplace soon after the learners start, but there is no process to draw these elements together in a summative report. Quality assurance is not formally considered by the senior management team and this was identified in the self-assessment report. A quality assurance review subcommittee of the senior management team has been set up, but has not established its procedures as yet. The self-assessment report identified strengths and weaknesses but the process was not an integral part of the quality assurance process.

79. Targets are set for starts and achievements each month and are disseminated by memorandum to all staff. However, there is little other evidence of target-setting. Internal verification varies between occupational areas but overall, is satisfactory. Internal verification meetings are held each month and are well attended by staff from all sites. External verifiers' reports are discussed and appropriate actions are planned, but the information is not passed to all staff.

Good Practice

A lone parent school leaver was able to attend a local training centre and a work-placement on a very flexible basis until such time that full attendance was possible. Support with childcare was arranged and the learner was gradually moved into full-time work and learning. The same learner has now gained several qualifications and works in a position of responsibility.