

INSPECTION REPORT

ETS Training

03 February 2003



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 Jobcentre Plus programmes. 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
- **learnirect** provision
- Adult and Community Learning
- training funded by Jobcentre Plus
- education and training in prisons, at the invitation of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Prisons.

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.

Overall judgement

In those cases where the overall judgement is that the provision is adequate, only those aspects of the provision which are less than satisfactory will be reinspected.

Provision will normally be deemed to be inadequate where:

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

This provision will be subject to a full reinspection.

The final decision as to whether the provision is inadequate rests with the Chief Inspector of Adult Learning. A statement as to whether the provision is adequate or not is included in the summary section of the inspection report.

SUMMARY

The provider

ETS Training, established in 1968 as Engineering Training Services Ltd, is part of the ETS Group and has registered charitable status. It provides foundation and advanced modern apprenticeships, and work-based learning in Cornwall and Devon in engineering, technology and manufacturing, business administration, management and professional, and retailing, customer service and transportation. It also carries out training for private companies, mainly in information technology and management, but these areas were not inspected.

Overall judgement

The overall quality of the provision is adequate to meet the needs of those receiving it. More specifically, training in retailing, customer service and transportation, and engineering, technology and manufacturing is satisfactory. Training in business administration, management and professional is good. Leadership and management are satisfactory. Equality of opportunity and quality assurance are also satisfactory.

GRADES

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

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

ETS TRAINING

KEY STRENGTHS

- commitment to equal opportunities
- effective appraisal and staff development
- good learner support
- good improvement in learners' job skills
- open and consultative management

KEY WEAKNESSES

- inadequate planning and management of training
- weak self-assessment
- slow progress towards key skills
- ineffective progress reviews

OTHER IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED

- better use of management information
- more systematic monitoring of quality assurance arrangements
- more consistent induction
- better understanding of NVQs and frameworks by employers

THE INSPECTION

1. Nine inspectors spent a total of 41 days at ETS Training (ETS) in February 2003. They interviewed 92 learners and examined 102 portfolios of evidence and 113 individual learning plans. They visited two providers' centres in Devon and Cornwall. They visited 72 employers' premises and interviewed 61 workplace supervisors and employers. They carried out interviews with 45 of the providers' staff and examined all relevant documents including the strategic plan, development plan, learners' individual learning plans and portfolios of evidence. Two learning sessions were observed. Inspectors also studied the self-assessment report which was updated in January 2003.

Grades awarded to learning sessions

	Grade 1	Grade 2	Grade 3	Grade 4	Grade 5	Grade 6	Grade 7	Total
Business administration, management & professional	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	1
Retailing, customer service & transportation	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	1
Total	0	0	2	0	0	0	0	2

THE PROVIDER AS A WHOLE

Context

2. ETS is a work-based learning organisation located in Exeter, Devon. It has an administration centre in Truro, Cornwall. ETS is supervised by a board of trustees referred to as the council, and has charitable status. The chief executive is responsible for identifying the strategic direction of ETS. He reports progress against the business plan on a quarterly basis to the council. This report, together with management information on recruitment, retention and achievement, and a finance report, aids the management review of the business. Regular meetings take place to update the council on developments. ETS has purchased a purpose-built training centre and headquarters in Exeter. Most of the funding for the provision is from the Devon and Cornwall local Learning and Skills Council (LSC). Provision for older learners is funded through the European Social Fund. ETS is registered with several awarding bodies to assess for foundation and advanced modern apprenticeships, and work-based learning.

3. Devon and Cornwall are predominantly rural areas. Much of the employment is seasonal. The unemployment rate in Devon and Cornwall in May 2002 was 2.9 per cent, compared with the national average of 3.1 per cent. The proportion of people from minority ethnic groups in Devon and Cornwall is 0.6 per cent, compared with the national average of 6.2 per cent. The number of young people who achieved five or more general certificates of secondary education (GCSEs) at grade C or above was 52 per cent, compared with the national average of 47.9 per cent.

Work-based learning for young people

4. Retention rates are good in business administration and management, but learners make slow progress towards modern apprenticeship framework achievement. Retention and achievement rates are satisfactory in retailing, customer service and transport. Retention rates are poor and are declining in engineering and manufacturing.

5. There is good learner support in all occupational areas provided by workplace supervisors, employers and the providers' staff. Learners in this occupational area on the modern apprenticeship, specifically for learners aged 25 years and above, make good progress. Progress reviews are weak and learners make slow progress towards their key skills. In business administration and management, training is well planned and learners, staff and employers have a good understanding of the modern apprenticeship frameworks. However, there is insufficient involvement of workplace supervisors in progress reviews. Learners on retailing, customer service and transport training programmes make good improvements in their job skills, but their progress reviews are ineffective.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

Grade 3

6. ETS is supervised by a board of trustees, referred to as the council, and has charitable status. The chief executive is responsible for identifying the strategic direction of ETS. He reports progress against the business plan on a quarterly basis to the ETS board. This report, together with management information on recruitment, retention and achievement, and a finance report, aids the management review of the business. ETS has a management team of 13 staff, 11 of whom are based in Devon and two in Cornwall. There is a training centre lead co-ordinator who manages seven staff who carry out internal verification. Eight additional self-employed staff assist with assessing learners' progress. There is an equal opportunities policy and a quality assurance policy and procedures. The self-assessment report was updated in January 2003.

STRENGTHS

- open and consultative management
- effective staff appraisal and development
- good commitment to equality of opportunity
- effective involvement of staff in developing quality assurance

WEAKNESSES

- inadequate management and planning of training
- inadequate action-planning for equality of opportunity
- weak self-assessment

OTHER IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED

- better use of management information
- better monitoring of employers' equality of opportunity arrangements
- more equality of opportunity training for staff
- more systematic monitoring of quality assurance arrangements

7. The management style at ETS is open and consultative. Staff at all levels are consulted regularly and encouraged to discuss their concerns and suggestions with line managers. Senior managers are fully involved in all issues and operate an open-door policy. ETS has a development plan and staff work well to achieve their targets. Senior staff meet regularly with staff to review targets and performance. Teamwork is good. ETS celebrates the successes of its learners and staff. Internal and external communications are good. Regular meetings take place throughout ETS and there is a good exchange of information between staff teams. For example, the consultants' meetings for self-employed staff who carry out assessment and internal verification, are attended by the training centre co-ordinator and other senior staff when appropriate.

ETS TRAINING

Items discussed, such as external verifier reports, are monitored through actions from minutes of assessors'/verifiers' meetings. Consultants' newsletters, which are produced to update staff on all aspects of training and assessment, include information on all aspects of ETS activity, including social events.

8. Staff appraisal and development are good. A thorough induction takes place for all staff. All staff understand their job roles and responsibilities. There is clear guidance on rights and responsibilities, current legislation and grievance and complaints procedures. There is good support for new staff from mentors and more experienced staff and managers. Staff are well qualified. An effective process of annual appraisal identifies individual learning needs linked to organisational training needs. Staff development needs are clearly linked to the development plan. All staff have an annual assessment, which includes personal and business objectives. Staff objectives, through individual performance plans, are regularly monitored against area targets and objectives, which are linked to the business plan. Most staff understand the overall objectives of ETS. Staff are encouraged to develop their skills by doing both internal and external training activities. Funding and time away from work is provided.

9. Training resources are good. The training centre in Exeter is particularly good. Although premises in Cornwall are adequate for staff, learners do not receive regular group training. Training is arranged in convenient locations, but for most staff, contact with learners is on the job by assessors when longer visits are arranged to cover induction and key skills.

10. Training at the Exeter training centre is well planned and a range of appropriate teaching and learning methods and materials are used. Induction is satisfactory and learners understand the requirements of their qualification, equal opportunities, health and safety and other relevant topics. Trainers provide learners with good training and support in building portfolios of evidence. Learners also receive support from staff at their employer's premises. ETS provides learners with funding to obtain additional qualifications in health and safety, first aid and evening keyboard courses. Individual training is provided for those learners unable to attend, however, some of this training is not adequate.

11. Planning and management of training is inadequate. Although there are contracts and service level agreements with employers, training is not well structured and managed. Employers are not involved effectively in assessment. Employers do not receive enough information about their role in training and assessment. They do not receive sufficient information on the learning programme and its content. Employers do not fully understand the requirements of the modern apprenticeship framework, the national vocational qualification (NVQ), or key skills. Employers are not sufficiently involved in developing individual learning plans. Workplace supervisors are not fully involved in the progress review process. Although employers receive copies of progress reviews, these are not linked to the training and assessment plans.

12. The management information system is not sufficiently developed. ETS collects data

on recruitment, retention and achievement rates and can provide information for compliance with contractual obligations. It does not use data as a basis for management decisions. There is not enough detailed analysis of these data, particularly to monitor the ethnic, gender and disability of learners or to identify trends in recruitment, retention and achievement. It is not used to aid improvements through the self-assessment process.

Equality of opportunity**Contributory grade 3**

13. There is a good commitment to equality of opportunity across the organisation. Learners are provided with effective support. They receive appropriate help with transport if necessary. Additional visits are arranged by training officers according to learners' needs. Staff also receive good support, including flexible working hours when necessary. Where personal issues are likely to prevent a learner from completing their qualification, training officers work well to help the learner towards completion or unit certification. Careful consideration is given to obtaining appropriate work placements for learners with disabilities. Provision of a modern apprenticeship for older learners has recently developed some widening participation. There is good access to the main building and training resources are available on the ground floor. Promotional and information materials are available on audio cassette, in large type, in Braille and in other languages.

14. Learners receive a guide to their learning programme, which includes a clearly worded equality of opportunity statement and a general reference to relevant legislation. Information is also provided on harassment and the grievance procedure. The employers' guide to the learning programme includes information on equal opportunities and harassment. As part of the learners' agreement between the learner, the employer and ETS, the company requires a copy of the employer's equal opportunities policy. However, some employers have not provided their policy, although it is recorded as received by ETS. A guidance booklet that includes a draft equal opportunities policy is given to those employers who do not have their own policy.

15. Equality of opportunity is included in the learners' induction. For the off-the-job induction this is generally effective. However, some learners who receive an on-the-job induction do not fully understand equality of opportunity. Equality of opportunity is included in the progress reviews. ETS has introduced a standard list of questions. Not all staff use these effectively and some recording of the discussions with the learners is not sufficiently detailed. Staff induction includes equality of opportunity. The staff handbook contains the company's anti-harassment policy and the dignity at work and equal opportunity code of practice. Staff are aware of these policies. A training session on equality of opportunity is provided for all staff. There is no ongoing staff training in equality of opportunity.

16. Action-planning is inadequate for equality of opportunity. Although progress reviews include discussions about equality of opportunity, this information is not collated and used to plan for improvements. Some equality of opportunity data are analysed for current learners, and more recently for new learners. However, insufficient use is made of these data to develop action plans. There is inadequate assessment of ETS's promotion of equality of opportunity, policies and practice. Insufficient use is made of target-setting and performance indicators for equality of opportunity. ETS does not monitor equality of opportunity for progression. There is insufficient use of data to influence recruitment policies and targeting of employers. ETS has recently promoted training to under-represented groups, by targeting appropriate employers. It is too early

for this initiative to have had an impact on recruitment. Complaints are dealt with effectively, using the company's procedures, although there is no systematic monitoring of the complaints received, to identify trends and plan appropriate actions. Action-planning for basic skills is inconsistent, with no ongoing basic skills support strategy, as identified in the self-assessment report. Some learners with basic skills needs are referred to other providers and for others, additional support is provided by ETS. Many of the company's action plans do not refer to equality of opportunity.

Quality assurance**Contributory grade 3**

17. There is effective involvement of staff in the development of quality assurance. The training centre co-ordinator and the administration and data co-ordinator manage quality assurance. Both report to the general manager responsible for quality assurance. Other members of staff are actively encouraged to contribute suggestions for improvements and developments. Quality assurance is discussed at the quarterly meetings of assessors and some information on developments is included in the weekly newsletter for staff. There are bi-annual quality assurance review meetings. ETS has a quality assurance manual and related procedures. As identified in the self-assessment report, some elements of the quality assurance policy do not provide sufficient detail, or links to the various elements of the policy, to ensure continuous improvement. A revised quality assurance manual is currently being developed. Developments or revisions to procedures are used as part of the process for continuous improvement. Internal auditing of quality assurance is satisfactory. There is systematic checking that key processes are followed and staff are aware that procedures must be followed. Any problems are corrected and rechecked. This process is also used to involve staff in discussions for improvements.

18. Some use is made of learners' and employers' feedback as part of continuous improvement. Most feedback is collected by use of postal questionnaires. These are provided to learners at the start, during and at the end of their learning programmes. For employers, these are issued on an annual basis. A stamped, addressed envelope is provided to encourage responses and has increased the response rate from learners. However, there is a low level of response from employers. The business plan for 2002-03 includes a quality assurance improvement strategy that focuses on the systematic collection and use of feedback from learners to develop the policy. Arrangements for annual target-setting for both achievement and retention, include follow-up of early leavers. However, there are insufficient links from the business plan quality assurance improvement strategy, to the self-assessment action plan. Data are used to monitor quality assurance and there is some use of performance indicators.

19. Monitoring of employers focuses on the initial stage of their involvement. A comprehensive checklist is used by ETS as part of the quality assurance process, although there are examples of the checklist not being fully completed. There is no formal system for the ongoing monitoring of employers, other than the progress review visits by assessors, when many employers are not directly involved.

20. Assessors visit learners to carry out progress reviews approximately every five weeks, although more frequent visits are made when necessary. For some learners, action-planning is inadequate and there are some examples of delays in assessment. Learners' portfolios are examined at various stages throughout the assessment process. There is a well-planned system for observations of assessment, although some aspects of performance monitoring are informal and are not recorded. Two newly qualified internal verifiers have been recruited in the previous 12 months. The planning of internal verification does not systematically monitor across all assessors, NVQ levels, units,

assessment centres and assessment methods. There is one site where the quality assurance policy and procedures are applied. However, some updates to procedures are not fully integrated in the quality assurance manual held at the site.

21. Self assessment is weak. The third self-assessment report was updated in January 2003. Staff were involved in the development of the self-assessment report through their participation in a series of workshops. There was no involvement of learners and employers in the process. The self-assessment report identifies the need to continuously improve areas that are strengths. However, much of the information is descriptive and some parts of the report are not sufficiently clear. It does not provide sufficient supporting evidence for the assessments in each of the areas of learning. While some of the inspection judgements matched those in the self-assessment report, inspectors identified different strengths and weaknesses. Action plans are inadequate. Some timescales are poor and there is insufficient information to adequately identify most of the monitoring processes. Many of the success indicators for improvement are unclear and are difficult to measure and monitor effectively.

AREAS OF LEARNING

Engineering, technology & manufacturing

Grade 3

Programmes inspected	Number of learners	Contributory grade
Work-based learning for young people	46	3

22. There are 46 learners working towards foundation or advanced modern apprenticeships or NVQs in engineering and manufacturing. Thirty-six learners are working towards the foundation modern apprenticeship in performing manufacturing operations, eight learners are working towards the advanced modern apprenticeship in performing manufacturing operations, and two learners are working towards an NVQ at level 2. There is a modern apprenticeship for adults over the age of 25 part-funded by the European Social Fund. This provision is specifically for Cornwall to assist mature learners in rural areas. There are 30 places available annually on this learning programme. Most learners are employed. Learners may join the learning programme at any time. Learners are recruited through employers. ETS contacts engineering and manufacturing employers to explain the learning programmes available and to carry out inductions in the workplace. All applicants have a comprehensive interview, including an initial assessment, before joining the learning programme and once accepted, are allocated an assessor. Learners receive an induction pack explaining the learning programme and the policies of ETS. Successful applicants are registered with the local LSC and awarding body. Training and assessment for engineering and manufacturing is provided by five staff. Of these, two are assessors, one is an internal verifier and two are both assessors and internal verifiers. All training and assessment is carried out on-the-job in the employers' premises throughout Cornwall and Devon. Progress reviews are carried out at least every five weeks.

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

Work-based learning for young people																	
Advanced modern apprenticeships (AMA)	2002-03		2001-02		2000-01		1999-2000										
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	
	Number of starts			7		3		1									
Retained*			0		2		0	0									
Successfully completed			0		0		0	0									
Still in learning			6		2		0	0									

*retained learners are those who have stayed in learning for at least the planned duration of their training programmes, or have successfully completed their programme within the time allowed

Work-based learning for young people																
Foundation modern apprenticeships (FMA)																
	2002-03		2001-02		2000-01		1999-2000									
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Number of starts	6		25		57		47									
Retained*	0		4		26		29	62								
Successfully completed	0		0		7		25	53								
Still in learning	5		16		15		0	0								

*retained learners are those who have stayed in learning for at least the planned duration of their training programmes, or have successfully completed their programme within the time allowed

Work-based learning for young people																
NVQ Training																
	2002-03		2001-02		2000-01		1999-2000									
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Number of starts			2		2		5									
Retained*			0		1	50	3	60								
Successfully completed			0		1	50	2	40								
Still in learning			2		0	0	0	0								

*retained learners are those who have stayed in learning for at least the planned duration of their training programmes, or have successfully completed their programme within the time allowed

STRENGTHS

- good learner support
- good progress for older learners

WEAKNESSES

- weak progress reviews
- slow progress towards key skills
- poor and declining retention rates in modern apprenticeships

OTHER IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED

- better understanding by employers of NVQs and frameworks
- better use of accreditation of prior learning and experience

23. Learner support is good. Employers provide good training in manufacturing which

ETS TRAINING

enables learners to develop various appropriate skills. Most learners can gain and practise some of the skills required for their NVQ in their work placement. Learners are regarded as important members of the workforce by their employers. Employers provide good learner support. Some employers have workplace supervisors who are following NVQs and provide good guidance and support for learners in the workplace. However, most workplace supervisors do not fully understand the NVQ requirements. Many employers allow learners time in the workplace to follow their qualification and provide a good range of additional training and qualifications within the workplace, but most do not understand the NVQ requirements sufficiently to help learners progress effectively. Some employers do not receive enough information about the NVQ. Some learners do not fully understand their learning programme or the modern apprenticeship. ETS assessors provide learners with frequent and effective support. Assessors' visits take place every five weeks, but additional visits are made according to learners' needs. Learners are often given the telephone numbers of their assessor. Learners are encouraged to contact ETS's staff at any time if they need help or guidance.

24. Older learners make good progress. ETS actively recruits mature learners. Most mature learners achieve individual NVQ units quickly and progress well. ETS pilots the modern apprenticeships for adults over the age of 25, which is exclusive to Cornwall and attracts many learners aged over 25: some of whom are near retirement. Many of these learners show good progress towards their qualification, even though they have only been following it for a short time. Of 11 learners who started the qualification in 2002, one has already completed it and another one is now ready for certification. Many others have compiled good portfolios and have already completed units towards their final qualifications. Other older learners show good skills and have progressed well towards their qualification. Some of these learners have considerable prior learning and experience which are not recorded at initial interview.

25. Progress reviews are weak. They do not include discussions between the learner, line manager and trainer/assessor on achievements to date, or the planning of short-term achievable targets. Line managers often subsequently sign the completed review. There is no space on the progress review form for learners' or employers' comments. Clear intermediate targets are not systematically set. There are insufficient specific targets to ensure progress towards qualification. Assessors set tasks for learners to complete between visits, but these are not always understood by learners. Some learners are not set sufficiently challenging short-term targets. Targets are not always discussed at the next progress review. Targets which are not met are not discussed. The distribution of completed progress review reports is adequate, but employers do not always make good use of the documents. They do not use it to provide suitable work tasks for learners. Learners do receive a copy of the progress review report. The progress review form is inadequate, for example, equality of opportunity is not sufficiently reinforced. Individual learning plans are satisfactory and are mostly updated, but in some cases, unit achievement is not recorded in a timely fashion. On some learning plans all achievement dates are the same as the end date and there is no planned dates for unit completion. Most learners do not understand their individual

learning plans. Health and safety is monitored during progress reviews. There is no clear link between progress reviews and individual learning plans. Some trainers/assessors do not give specific feedback against the units and elements of the NVQ, and learners are unsure about what they have achieved.

26. Most learners make slow progress in key skills training and assessment. Some learners have been on the learning programme for long periods and have not started their key skills or are making little progress in key skills. Some learners do not understand the key skills requirements. Many learners who have completed an NVQ at level 2 have only recently started to work towards their key skills qualification. Key skills training and assessment is provided at the end of the learning programme. Some learners are achieving most of their qualification before they start key skills training. Many learners are not aware of the content or level of the key skills units and do not know how they will be assessed. They are unable to collect evidence for key skills as they build their manufacturing portfolios. They are not encouraged to collect relevant work-based evidence and witness testimonies for key skills. Employers are insufficiently aware of key skills. They do not provide relevant support. Assessors do not record evidence of key skills when they observe learners for the NVQ. Many learners are not able to cross-reference their NVQ evidence to the key skills units.

27. Retention is poor and numbers of learners being retained has declined over the previous three years. The retention rate for foundation modern apprentices has reduced from 62 per cent in 1999-2000 to 46 per cent in 2000-01 and 16 per cent in 2001-02.

Business administration, management & professional**Grade 2**

Programmes inspected	Number of learners	Contributory grade
Work-based learning for young people	126	2

28. There are currently 126 learners on work-based learning programmes in business administration and management. Most learners are employed in administration occupations and are encouraged by their employers to work towards modern apprenticeships. Of these, 55 are advanced modern apprentices, 70 are foundation modern apprentices, and one is working towards an NVQ. There are five learners aged over 25 years on other government-funded provision working towards NVQs in business administration and management. Staff visit the workplace to inform learners and their employers of the learning programmes available. The components of the modern apprenticeship framework are chosen to match each learner's job role. Training is provided in the workplace. Evidence of these skills is collected with the guidance of assessors who visit learners at work every four or five weeks. Learners work towards NVQs in business administration at levels 2, 3 and 4, and in management at levels 3 and 4. Learners also work towards key skills, units of customer service NVQs and information technology (IT) qualifications. Initial assessment of key skills and learning styles is carried out at the beginning of the learning programme. Induction is given individually to learners who cannot attend the training provider's premises. Group inductions are provided for learners who are able to attend the learning centre in Exeter. Topics discussed at induction include health, safety and equality of opportunity. Six off-the-job key skills training days are provided each month. There are 11 qualified assessors and one who is working towards the assessors' awards. Eight of the assessors are also qualified verifiers. There is also another lead verifier and six qualified internal verifiers. A further three internal verifiers are currently being trained. Learners who need additional support for basic skills are referred to specialist training providers.

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

Work-based learning for young people																	
Advanced modern apprenticeships (AMA)																	
	2002-03		2001-02		2000-01		1999-2000										
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	
Number of starts	12		34		71		69										
Retained*	0		33		48		58	84									
Successfully completed	0		12		27		58	84									
Still in learning	12		22		21		0	0									

*retained learners are those who have stayed in learning for at least the planned duration of their training programmes, or have successfully completed their programme within the time allowed

Work-based learning for young people																	
Foundation modern apprenticeships (FMA)																	
	2002-03		2001-02		2000-01		1999-2000		1995-96								
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	
Number of starts	22		58		52		34										
Retained*	20		44		25		22	65									
Successfully completed	0		7		12		22	65									
Still in learning	20		37		13		0	0									

*retained learners are those who have stayed in learning for at least the planned duration of their training programmes, or have successfully completed their programme within the time allowed

Work-based learning for young people																	
NVQ Training																	
	2001-02		2000-01														
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	
Number of starts	1		7														
Retained*	1		7	100													
Successfully completed	0		7	100													
Still in learning	1		0	0													

*retained learners are those who have stayed in learning for at least the planned duration of their training programmes, or have successfully completed their programme within the time allowed

ETS TRAINING

Other government-funded provision										
	2002-03		2001-02		2000-01		1999-2000		1998-99	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
	Number of starts	1		4						
Retained	0	0	0	0						
Planned learning completed	0	0	0	0						
Gained job	0	0	0	0						
Still in training	1	100	4	100						

STRENGTHS

- good learner support
- well-planned training
- very good understanding of modern apprenticeship frameworks by learners, staff and employers
- good and improving retention rates of learners

WEAKNESSES

- slow progress towards framework achievement
- insufficient involvement of workplace supervisors in progress reviews

OTHER IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED

- better planning of internal verification
- better use of initial assessment
- more use of professional discussion
- better understanding of accredited prior achievement by staff and learners

29. Good learner support is provided in the workplace by assessors and workplace supervisors. The providers' staff visit learners in the workplace every five weeks or more often if necessary. All learners are given a 24-hour telephone helpline number. Where learners have to travel to Exeter for off-the-job training, providers' staff are available to collect them from bus and train stations. Learners are sent a written reminder of their next assessment date, and are telephoned on the day to ensure that they are available. Action-planning is detailed and focused, and learners produced well-structured portfolios

of evidence. The portfolios show a clear improvement in the standard of learners' work over the duration of the learning programme. The confidence of learners improves and they are able to work independently and prioritise workloads. Learners on the modern apprenticeship for adults over the age of 25 also receive good support.

30. Training is well planned. This strength was identified in the self-assessment report. Action-planning is recorded well. Learners are able to identify their progress, and know what they have to do to achieve their target qualifications. During off-the-job training sessions, learners are grouped effectively so that skills and experiences can be shared across the group. Learners produce detailed planning of evidence collection. They develop their critical and analytical skills in order to match evidence to performance criteria. There is good relevant documentation to support this process.

31. Learners, staff and employers understand the modern apprenticeship framework. Learners are introduced to all elements of the NVQ and evidence collection early in their learning programme. Optional units are suggested relevant to their job. These are revised and updated in response to any changes to the job description. Learners are fully aware of the additional NVQ units and the key skills that have to be achieved. Many workplace supervisors are holders of NVQs and understand the process. One employer identified the standards that would match a specific spreadsheet produced by a learner. During workplace visits, assessors keep workplace supervisors informed of the various elements of the learning programmes. Many workplace supervisors are able to vary the workplace activity to help learners collect relevant evidence. ETS's staff are appropriately qualified and there is a clear commitment to continuous professional development. There is a well-planned programme of staff development in place, which provides for both in-house training and attendance at externally hosted events.

32. Retention rates are good and improving; a strength identified in the self-assessment report. Of the advanced modern apprentices recruited in 2000-01, 2001-02 and 2002-03, 67 per cent, 97 per cent and 100 per cent respectively, have either achieved all aspects of their individual learning plan or are still in training. Of the foundation modern apprentices recruited for the same years, 50 per cent, 76 per cent and 91 per cent respectively have either achieved all aspects of their individual learning plan or are still in training. One hundred per cent of older learners have achieved the framework or are still in training. Many learners have reached the end of their scheduled learning programme but are still supported by assessors.

33. Learners make slow progress towards modern apprenticeship framework achievement. Many learners gain the required qualifications after the planned time for the learning programme. The provider continues to assess these learners and most of them achieve the qualification after the planned duration of the learning programme. In both foundation and advanced modern apprenticeships, learners have achieved their NVQ without key skills. Although achievement of modern apprenticeship frameworks was good in 1999-2000, it is currently unsatisfactory. NVQ achievement is good. As identified in the self-assessment report, there is insufficient focus on completing individual NVQ units. There is little sense of urgency in achievement and some interim

ETS TRAINING

targets are not met. Some learners do not complete evidence in preparation for key skills workshops. Others in the same groups are delayed while the outstanding evidence is completed by less-motivated learners. Specific timescales are not set for these targets.

34. Workplace supervisors are not sufficiently involved in progress reviews. Assessors and learners provide workplace supervisors with the progress review sheet who then sign it to acknowledge receipt. Some employers always attend progress reviews, but others do not. Some employers are not invited to the bi-annual progress reviews and there are no arrangements to ensure that a recorded three-way discussion takes place. This was identified in the self-assessment report and a new form with space for their contributions has been designed. There is no single, effective document that gives a full picture of learners' progress in all aspects of the learning programme.

35. Internal verification is not planned early. Poor assessment practice is not identified quickly. For example, some learners' work is not validated or authenticated by assessors and workplace supervisors. There is not enough evidence that direct questioning takes place. Professional discussion is not used for learners who have extensive occupational experience and are clearly competent in skills required by the qualifications. Evidence is not checked by internal verification in many portfolios until the final sampling. There is no strategy to ensure consistency in assessment between assessors across specific units of an NVQ. Learner's views are not collected during the early stages of the learning programme.

36. Although initial assessment is carried out, it is not used to develop individual learning plans. Assessors give multiple-choice questionnaires to learners to complete in their own time. Some learners do not complete them or do not return them. Some learners do not tell the assessor if they find it difficult to complete. Basic skills are not systematically assessed. Learners who have additional learning needs are directed to specialist training providers. Assessors provide extra help for learners if necessary, but many assessors are not qualified to carry this out. Learners and some assessors do not fully understand the accreditation of prior achievement of key skills. Some learners have good GCSE and advanced (A) level grades. They are unsure whether they have to complete portfolios and external assessment or if they are exempt. GCSE or A level results are not used to produce individual learning plans. One learner completed additional customer service units with another awarding body and training provider, but this was not recorded on the individual learning plan.

Good Practice

One learner who writes slowly was scheduled to complete the key skills first so that one aspect could be completed at a time. The learner has completed a portfolio of all five key skills and achieved a unit of the NVQ in six months.

Retailing, customer service & transportation**Grade 3**

Programmes inspected	Number of learners	Contributory grade
Work-based learning for young people	126	3

37. There are 126 learners on work-based learning programmes in retailing, customer service and transportation. There are 84 foundation modern apprentices, 41 in customer service, 28 in retail and 15 in distribution and warehousing. There are 40 advanced modern apprentices, 39 in customer service and one in retail. Two learners are working towards NVQs at level 2 in customer service. Most learners are recruited directly from employers, others are referred by the careers service and others respond to press advertising and careers events. Most learners are employed. Learners attend a training centre for induction and key skills workshops, but most training and assessment takes place in the workplace. Initial assessment is carried out to identify the level of learners' communication and number skills. Learners complete an initial basic skills assessment and any learners with additional learning and/or social needs are referred to specialist providers.

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

Work-based learning for young people																	
Advanced modern apprenticeships (AMA)	2002-03		2001-02		2000-01		1999-2000										
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	
	Number of starts	7		43		56		52									
Retained*	0		3		27		44	85									
Successfully completed	0		0		19		41	79									
Still in learning	7		29		4		0	0									

*retained learners are those who have stayed in learning for at least the planned duration of their training programmes, or have successfully completed their programme within the time allowed

ETS TRAINING

Work-based learning for young people																
Foundation modern apprenticeships (FMA)																
	2002-03		2001-02		2000-01		1999-2000									
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Number of starts	25		96		62		51									
Retained*	0		31		37		29	57								
Successfully completed	0		1		19		23	45								
Still in learning	23		53		8		0	0								

*retained learners are those who have stayed in learning for at least the planned duration of their training programmes, or have successfully completed their programme within the time allowed

Work-based learning for young people																
NVQ Training																
	2001-02		2000-01		1999-2000											
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Number of starts	3		9		11											
Retained*	2		6	67	11	100										
Successfully completed	0		6	67	5	45										
Still in learning	2		0	0	0	0										

*retained learners are those who have stayed in learning for at least the planned duration of their training programmes, or have successfully completed their programme within the time allowed

STRENGTHS

- good learner support
- good improvement in learners' job skills

WEAKNESSES

- slow progress for some learners
- ineffective progress reviews

OTHER IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED

- better planning of internal verification
- more consistent induction
- better planning and co-ordination of training
- more availability of learner support materials

38. Learner support is good. Assessors visit learners each month to plan and they build good working relationships. They provide good support to help learners produce their portfolios of evidence. Assessors' observations are good. A wide variety of diverse evidence, including photographs and video recordings is collected. Portfolios are well presented and are clearly indexed by the learner. Learners are able to contact assessors between visits by telephone and email. Additional, more frequent visits are used if a learner needs more support. Assessors respond quickly to learners when problems arise. A learner's assessor was changed when this was requested. The new assessor provided good appropriate support and help through a new induction. Learners who attend off-the-job induction and key skills training develop good working relationships. Learners who live in outlying areas are transported or reimbursed to attend off-the-job training. ETS helps learners to find work placements. There are many excellent work-placement providers which provide good learner support and training. One learner was given reduced and flexible working hours while awaiting hospital treatment.

39. Learners' job skills develop well during their learning programmes. Training meets learners' needs and career aims. Learners are able to carry out their job roles effectively. Learners confidently work with their colleagues and deal with customers. Projects and case studies carried out in the workplace are integrated with the employer's business. All workplaces are appropriate. Some learners have been promoted into more responsible job roles. Employers understand the business benefits of having employees on learning programmes. One employer is consulting with ETS to develop a staff training and development programme for his workforce. This is the result of an employee joining his staff who was already taking part in the advanced modern apprenticeship programme provided by ETS.

40. Achievement rates on distribution and warehousing programmes are satisfactory. Of the 39 learners that have left the learning programme since 1999, 17 have achieved their NVQ. Of the 28 leavers from modern apprenticeship programmes, six achieved the full framework. Retention rates show an upward trend but attainment of key skills is still slow. Achievement and retention rates on retail and customer service learning programmes are satisfactory. The achievement rate for advanced modern apprentices is 51 per cent and retention is 63 per cent. The achievement rate for foundation modern apprentices is 29 per cent and retention is 65 per cent.

41. Some learners make slow progress toward the achievement of their qualifications. Several learners have been on their learning programme for some time and have not achieved any units of the NVQ. Assessment is not planned well. One learner has been on the learning programme for two years and has achieved only two elements of an NVQ unit. Learners collect evidence early in their learning programme, but it is not always useful for the qualification. The accreditation of prior learning does not identify the past experience of many learners. Target-setting is inadequate. Learners are sometimes unaware of their progress. Evidence reference sheets have not been issued or completed. There is not enough use of professional discussion to help experienced learners progress more quickly. Key skills training and assessment is introduced late in the learning programme. One learner thought she had finished her portfolio but more

ETS TRAINING

assessment was needed. Interim planning of internal verification is weak and there is insufficient monitoring of learners' progress. Slow progress is not identified at an early stage in the learning programme. Learners often do not know who the internal verifier is or whether their portfolio has been verified.

42. Progress reviews are ineffective. They do not involve employers and rely on discussion between the learner and assessor. Employers are not invited to discuss learners' overall progress. They do not get information on what is required from them to support learners' progress. Most learners and employers are unaware that a review has taken place. Progress reviews are not differentiated from normal assessment. Progress reviews do not cover the complete learning programmes and individual learning plans are not used or updated during the process. There are no summaries of learners' achievements. Some learners do not know their progression and achievement. There is no formal record of feedback from learners and employers.

43. Learners in the workplace are unable to identify that their work has been seen by an internal verifier and do not recall feedback from the internal verifier or assessor. Procedures require assessors to be monitored by the internal verifier for workplace competence, but this is not broken down into occupational areas. Monitoring of assessors within their occupational areas does not identify issues relating to occupational assessment practice.

44. The ETS in-house induction programme is effective. However, learners who receive an induction by their employers do not have the same induction programme. There is not the same emphasis on communication and teamwork. Some employers have good learning programmes for learners. In some areas, training has not been acknowledged by the assessors. Employers' training is used consistently as evidence for accreditation. Initial assessment does not always identify accreditation of prior learning and achievement. In some cases, the learners' progress reports do not acknowledge workplace progression.

45. ETS relies on employers' or learners' research to produce most learning resources. Learners who are placed with small employers do not always have access to the resources required for their learning programme.

Good Practice

One learner is carrying out a client survey as part of a key skills assignment. The evaluation from this survey will be used by the employer's management board to assess clients' needs and influence their purchasing strategy.