

INSPECTION REPORT

Rainer City Training Solent

14 October 2005



ADULT LEARNING
INSPECTORATE

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 learning within the remit of a single inspectorate. The ALI is responsible for inspecting a wide range of government-funded learning, including:

- work-based learning for all people aged 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.

Pre-inspection analysis

The resources allocated to a cycle 2 inspection are primarily determined by the findings from the previous inspection. Account is also taken of information about achievement and retention obtained from the funding body, and any significant changes in the size or scope of the provision.

Where a provider has received good grades in cycle 1, the cycle 2 inspection is relatively light. If the provider offers a number of areas of learning, a restricted sample is inspected.

Where a provider has received satisfactory grades in cycle 1, the cycle 2 inspection is less intensive and it is possible that not all areas of learning are included.

Where there are significant unsatisfactory grades from cycle 1, the intensity of the cycle 2 inspection is broadly the same as cycle 1, and all significant areas of learning are inspected.

Providers that have not previously been inspected will receive a full inspection.

Overall effectiveness

The grades given for areas of learning and leadership and management will be used to arrive at a judgement about the overall effectiveness of the provider.

An **outstanding** provider should typically have leadership and management and at least half of the areas of learning judged to be a grade 1. All area of learning grades will be graded 1 or 2.

A **good** provider should have leadership and management and at least half of the area of learning grades judged to be a grade 2 or better. A good training provider should not have any grade 4s, and few grade 3s in the areas of learning.

A **satisfactory** provider should have adequate or better grades in leadership and management and in at least two thirds of the area of learning grades. An adequate provider might have a range of grades across areas of learning, some of which might be graded 4.

Provision will normally be deemed to be **inadequate** where more than one third of the area of learning grades and/or leadership and management are judged to be inadequate.

The final decision as to whether the provision is inadequate rests with the Chief Inspector of Adult Learning.

Grading

Inspectors use a four-point scale to summarise their judgements about the quality of provision in occupational/curriculum areas and Jobcentre Plus programmes, as well as to summarise their judgements about the quality of learning sessions. The same scale is used to describe the quality of leadership and management, which includes equality of opportunity and quality assurance. The descriptors for the four grades are:

- *grade 1 - outstanding*
- *grade 2 - good*
- *grade 3 - satisfactory*
- *grade 4 - inadequate*

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INSPECTION REPORT

DESCRIPTION OF THE PROVIDER

1. Rainer City Training Solent (RCTS) is a work-based learning provider that was originally formed in 1982 as a department within Portsmouth City Council. RCTS has invested in improving facilities and now operates from two training centres in central Portsmouth, with the second being recently developed to support off-the-job training and an expansion in numbers of learners in New Deal for young people training. New developments include a value-added unit to support learners in key skills training. RCTS has 37 full-time and five part-time staff. An interpreter gives language support to English for speakers of other languages (ESOL) learners, including asylum seekers and refugees newly arrived in the UK. RCTS trains volunteer mentors and matches them to young people with individual support needs.

2. RCTS has a contract with the Hampshire and Isle of Wight Learning and Skills Council (LSC) to provide apprenticeships and national vocational qualifications (NVQs) for young people within the areas of social and childcare, sport and recreation, and business administration. RCTS also provides NVQ training in horticulture and retailing and distribution. In partnership with two local colleges, RCTS is a Centre of Vocational Excellence (CoVE) for its health and social care provision. RCTS provides employability training through Entry to Employment (E2E) programmes. New Deal for young people programmes are funded by Jobcentre Plus.

OVERALL EFFECTIVENESS

Grade 3

3. **The overall effectiveness of the provision is satisfactory.** Its leadership and management and quality improvement arrangements are satisfactory. Equality of opportunity is good. Provision in health, public services and care, and preparation for life and work programmes are satisfactory. Leisure, travel and tourism is good.

4. **The inspection team had some confidence in the reliability of the self-assessment process.** The process is inclusive of all staff and takes account of learners' and employers' views. However, it failed to recognise some of the weaknesses that the inspectors found in the areas of learning. The report over-emphasised some of the organisation's strengths.

5. **The provider has demonstrated that it has sufficient capacity to make improvements.** Senior managers and staff are committed to improving the quality of the provision. RCTS has sound development plans, although timescales to achieve them have been over-optimistic. Its strategies to improve retention are effective. Its steps to improve achievement are beginning to have an effect.

KEY CHALLENGES FOR RAINER CITY TRAINING SOLENT:

- improve the learners' retention, achievement and employment rates
- improve target-setting
- fully implement the strategy for skills for life
- improve its use of data
- continue to improve teaching and learning

GRADES

grade 1 = outstanding, grade 2 = good, grade 3 = satisfactory, grade 4 = inadequate

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

Health, public services and care			3
Contributory areas:	Number of learners	Contributory grade	
Social care Apprenticeships for young people	34	3	
Early years Apprenticeships for young people	22	3	

Leisure, travel and tourism			2
Contributory areas:	Number of learners	Contributory grade	
Sport, leisure and recreation Apprenticeships for young people	32	2	

Preparation for life and work			3
Contributory areas:	Number of learners	Contributory grade	
Employability training New Deal for young people	72	3	
Entry to Employment	80	3	

ABOUT THE INSPECTION

6. This is RCTS's third full inspection. The health, social care and public services provision in adult care and early years and childcare were inspected and reported on. RCTS has a

CoVE in adult care with two partner colleges. In the leisure, travel and tourism area of learning, the contributory area of sport and recreation provision was inspected and graded. Within preparation for life and work, employability training was inspected and graded, which included E2E and New Deal for young people. RCTS's provision in retailing and commercial enterprise, horticulture or business administration was not inspected due to the low number of learners.

Number of inspectors	5
Number of inspection days	23
Number of learners interviewed	70
Number of staff interviewed	24
Number of employers interviewed	17
Number of subcontractors interviewed	1
Number of locations/sites/learning centres visited	27
Number of partners/external agencies interviewed	3
Number of visits	19

KEY FINDINGS

Achievements and standards

7. Achievement rates for sport and recreation on apprenticeship programmes are good and improving. In 2001-02, 27 per cent of learners starting achieved their full framework. The pass rate for the framework improved to 40 per cent in 2002-03, and 58 per cent in 2003-04, with 25 per cent still in learning. Of those who began their programme in 2004-05, 89 per cent are still in learning. Learners in sport instructing reach a high standard of practical skills. Learners' portfolios are satisfactory and contain a range of evidence linked to their performance. Learners develop more advanced skills in circuit training and working with children.

8. In care programmes, learners' achievement of the full framework is low, particularly on programmes in early years. Learners' achievements on the care programmes over the same period are slightly better but remain unsatisfactory overall. Eight of 29 advanced apprentices, and 16 of the 54 apprentices, completed their framework successfully. Recent quality initiatives indicate that current learners are making better progress towards their qualifications. The development of learners' workplace skills is good and their occupational practice has improved as a result of their learning. Most learners' portfolios are well organised. The standard of work is generally satisfactory and some of it is good.

9. In preparation for life and work programmes, learners' progression rates are low. In 2003-04, 26 per cent of learners progressed from the E2E programme, and in 2004-05 only 35 per cent progressed. Forty-nine of these learners are still in training. However, strategies for improvement are beginning to have an effect. These rates include Young Mothers to Be (YMTB) learners who do not remain in training long enough to gain their full qualifications.

10. The completion and retention rates for the New Deal programme have recently declined. In 2003-04, 68 per cent of learners completed their programme, while in 2004-05, 49 per cent completed. However, there are still 54 learners in training. All learners can access additional qualifications in health and safety, food hygiene, and first aid, as well as qualifications in literacy, numeracy and language and information technology.

The quality of provision

Grades given to learning sessions

	Grade 1	Grade 2	Grade 3	Grade 4	Total
Health, public services and care	0	2	1	0	3
Leisure, travel and tourism	0	1	0	0	1
Preparation for life and work	0	3	5	2	10
Total	0	6	6	2	14

11. In sport and care programmes, off-the-job training is well planned. The standard of teaching is good. Schemes of work and lesson plans clearly identify learning objectives, which are shared with learners and evaluated at the end of the day. Teaching includes a good variety of activities to sustain the learners' concentration. RCTS makes good links between off-the-job activities and learners' job roles to support learning and maintain interest. There are frequent checks on learning and understanding.

12. Learners are particularly well prepared for employment. They take part in jobsearch and interview preparation sessions. During their induction period, a learning and employment co-ordinator matches those learners who are ready to an appropriate work placement. RCTS has good contacts with a wide range of local employers. They receive a comprehensive information pack about RCTS, the training programme and the learner. Employers are impressed by the way learners conduct themselves at their interviews and are committed to their work. RCTS provides a good range of work placements. Learners on New Deal for young people gain work and personal skills, including confidence. There are insufficient work placements available.

13. Learners receive particularly good individual support and guidance. Thorough initial assessment helps RCTS's staff to provide appropriate support based on sound knowledge of the learners' individual needs. Learning and employment co-ordinators visit learners in their workplace to check their progress usually every fortnight. The introduction of the red, amber, green (RAG) system has already been beneficial to some learners who have fallen behind with their work. Learners are supported by volunteer mentors and a full-time interpreter. Each week the learners can access an added-value unit and receive support with key skills to access computers or seek advice and guidance on assignments.

14. Literacy and numeracy support are satisfactory. Following diagnostic assessment and learning styles analysis, skills for life staff and learners agree individual timetables. Skills for life is the government's strategy on training in literacy, numeracy and the use of language. RCTS provides daily literacy and numeracy sessions. It makes good use of pair work. Learners support each other and make good progress. However, some lesson plans do not contain a breakdown of learning objectives and activities, some lessons are poorly paced and teaching resources used are limited. Individual literacy and numeracy support is available.

15. Target-setting to promote progress is ineffective in care and employability training. Some learners are unaware of their targets for the key skills element of their framework and their NVQ targets. New learners are unaware of completion dates. Learners do not have access to a framework overview that gives them information about their overall success. Use of individual learning plans in review meetings is insufficient. Targets are often vague and are not linked to the learners' learning or employment goals. Learners on the E2E programme complete a monitoring sheet at the end of each session, but few tutors provide learners with feedback on their performance. New Deal learners are unclear about their next steps in learning.

16. In care, there is insufficient involvement of some employers in the review process. Learners receive frequent visits and reviews of their progress. However, some employers have little knowledge of the NVQ programme and its requirements, and they are unaware of how well their learner is progressing. They make little contribution to the training. Others are involved and play a full part in facilitating their learner's progress.

17. In preparation for life and work, the provision for ESOL is inadequate. Course planning is weak. Lesson plans do not contain detailed language learning objectives or timed activities to ensure that learners improve their language skills. Language learning is not linked to the employment context. Learning materials are not appropriate for the learners' language level and no adaptations are made to these materials. There is too much reliance on photocopied handouts and whiteboards.

Leadership and management

18. Staff involvement in the strategic direction of RCTS is good. They contribute to clear strategic plans, initiatives and the service plan through staff focus groups and meetings. RCTS has invested significantly in resources, access for learners with mobility difficulties and a new training centre. New initiatives have been particularly successful, including the introduction of the added-value unit in offering mentoring and support. Staff take responsibility for initiatives, projects and new training programmes.

19. Internal communication of RCTS is very effective. Staff and managers attend regular meetings, which all have a clear purpose. Meetings are well planned to ensure the good communication of information between senior managers and staff team meetings. Staff are well informed through frequent newsletters. Electronic communication has been developed considerably and is very effective. Staff have good access to shared information through RCTS's intranet. There is a strong and close approach to teamworking across RCTS. Teams share good practice regularly, but RCTS does not always share best practice across the organisation.

20. Employers receive a good level of support from RCTS. The employers' guide has been reviewed recently, and is useful and clear. RCTS gives employers very good health and safety support, especially in developing their own procedures and risk assessments in the workplace. A wide range of work placements have been developed that offer the learners a good learning experience. In some areas of learning, tutors have taken the off-the-job training into employers' premises to make it more accessible for groups of learners and employers. Links with employers are being developed further through consortia and the CoVE in adult care.

21. **Promotion and understanding of equality of opportunity is good.** Social inclusion is central to the ethos of RCTS. Staff are well trained and are skilled in helping young people to overcome their significant barriers to participation in learning and gaining employment. All learners receive effective training in a well-planned equality and diversity session in their induction. A good range of learning materials that explores issues and challenges prejudices is available on the intranet. RCTS has creative ideas for activities in diversity that interest young people.

22. **RCTS has an appropriate strategy for skills for life.** Awareness of literacy, numeracy and language support has been raised considerably through the introduction of the skills for life and added-value units. The support given through the added-value unit has increased key skills test pass rates significantly. However, the language support for ESOL learners is not well managed.

23. Teaching and learning are satisfactory. Eighty per cent of the lessons observed were satisfactory or better. Some lessons challenge learners to solve problems or learn new vocabulary. Classes are well managed and all learners take turns to ask or respond to questions. Induction sessions are well planned and RCTS makes good use of an in-house video.

24. **Some targets set by RCTS are ineffective.** RCTS has only very recently set its own targets for retention and achievement rates at area of learning level. These targets focus too heavily on leavers' rates, which makes it difficult for RCTS to identify and monitor trends over time. Some targets are unrealistic, considering last year's performance and the current number of early leavers. Although targets exist for the progression of E2E learners into work and further training, RCTS has not set targets for progression onto their own work-based learning programmes.

25. **Management of a subcontractor is insufficient.** This issue currently only affects a small number of learners. However, the signed contract is inadequate, and does not cover the full range of activities that RCTS expects the subcontractor to carry out. There has been insufficient formal monitoring of learners' progress.

26. **RCTS's quality assurance arrangements are ineffective in ensuring the consistency of some aspects of the work-based learning programmes.** There is insufficient monitoring of much of the paperwork connected with these learners, including individual learning plans, employers' contracts and learners' progress reviews. RCTS has recognised many of these issues in the senior management meetings and it is reviewing some of its quality assurance and improvement systems.

27. **Self-assessment at RCTS is insufficiently thorough.** Staff are fully involved in the self-assessment process and have a good awareness of the self-assessment quality improvement plan, which the organisation reviews regularly. The previous year's self-assessment has resulted in improvement, in particular in the framework achievement rates on sport and recreation. However, self-assessment is insufficiently self-critical and in some areas of learning there are few or no identified weaknesses.

Leadership and management

Strengths

- good staff involvement in strategic direction
- very effective internal communication
- good support for employers
- good promotion and understanding of equality of opportunity
- good initiatives for quality improvement

Weaknesses

- some weak target-setting
- ineffective quality assurance of some aspects of work-based learning
- insufficient management of subcontractors
- insufficiently thorough self-assessment

Health, public services and care

Strengths

- good development of learners' workplace skills
- well-planned off-the-job training and good teaching
- good support and guidance of learners

Weaknesses

- low achievement of frameworks
- insufficient involvement of some employers in reviews and training

Leisure, travel and tourism

Sport, leisure and recreation

Grade 2

Strengths

- good and improving achievement rates
- good development of skills and understanding in off-the-job training
- very effective measures to improve learners' achievement rates
- high-quality work placements

Weaknesses

- ineffective target-setting to promote learners' progress

Preparation for life and work

Employability training

Grade 3

Strengths

- good activities to develop workplace skills
- particularly effective preparation for employment
- particularly good personal support

Weaknesses

- inadequate target-setting
- inadequate planning of ESOL provision

WHAT LEARNERS LIKE ABOUT RAINER CITY TRAINING SOLENT:

- the friendly tutors
- 'being treated as adults - it's nothing like school'
- help with key skills
- the flexible timetable
- 'they find good work placements for us'

WHAT LEARNERS THINK RAINER CITY TRAINING SOLENT COULD IMPROVE:

- the facilities in the common room, especially for lunchtime
- the communication about changes to the timetable
- the amount of regular off-the-job training

DETAILED INSPECTION FINDINGS

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

Grade 3

Strengths

- good staff involvement in strategic direction
- very effective internal communication
- good support for employers
- good promotion and understanding of equality of opportunity
- good initiatives for quality improvement

Weaknesses

- some weak target-setting
- ineffective quality assurance of some aspects of work-based learning
- insufficient management of subcontractors
- insufficiently thorough self-assessment

28. Staff have good opportunities to contribute to strategies, initiatives and the service plan through staff focus groups and meetings. RCTS has clear strategic direction, with good links between its service plan, self-assessment and the corporate plan. The service plan has a clear focus on improving the learners' experience and offering high-quality training, guidance and support. RCTS has invested significantly in resources, access for learners with mobility difficulties and a new training centre. New initiatives have been particularly successful, including the introduction of the added-value unit in offering mentoring and support. Staff take responsibility for initiatives, projects and new training programmes. They benefit from very effective arrangements for consultation before Rainer, the parent organisation, introduces new organisation-wide procedures, for example the recent changes to the appraisal process.

29. Internal communication at RCTS is very effective. Staff and managers attend regular meetings, which all have a clear purpose. Meetings are well planned to ensure good communication between senior managers and staff team meetings. Staff are well informed through frequent newsletters. Electronic communication has been developed considerably and it is very effective. Staff have good access to shared information through RCTS's intranet. There is a strong and close approach to team working across RCTS. Teams regularly share good practice but RCTS does not always share best practice across the organisation.

30. Employers receive a good level of support from RCTS. The employer's guide has recently been reviewed, and it is useful and clear. RCTS gives employers very good health and safety support, especially in developing their own procedures and risk assessments in the workplace. A wide range of work placements has been developed that offers the learners a good learning experience. In some areas of learning, tutors have taken the off-the-job training into employers' premises to make it more accessible for groups of learners and employers. Links with employers are being developed further through consortia and the CoVE in learning disabilities and mental health.

31. RCTS has a well-established appraisal system, which it is changing to focus more on competencies. The quality of feedback and target-setting in appraisal varies, and some of the targets are vague. New staff are well supported with mentors and have an effective induction. Staff attend regular training and development on a wide range of topics. RCTS has a good number of staff with teaching qualifications and has set targets to improve this. However, some staff have not had sufficient specific training in delivering literacy, numeracy and ESOL training.

32. RCTS has sufficient appropriately qualified staff on most courses. It has recently developed a contingency plan to cover staff absences. Staff access to computers is good. Although teaching and learning resources are generally satisfactory, in childcare and literacy and numeracy the limited resources inhibit some of the learning experience.

33. RCTS has an appropriate strategy for skills for life. Awareness of literacy, numeracy and language support has been raised considerably through the introduction of the skills for life and added-value units. The support given through the added-value unit has increased key skills test pass rates significantly. However, the language support for ESOL learners is not well managed.

34. The use of management information systems, which was a weakness at the previous inspection, is now satisfactory. RCTS uses data regularly to monitor performance against contractual targets. The management information system was changed in the past year, and there have been a few inaccuracies in the transfer of data from the old to the new system.

35. RCTS has introduced some appropriate strategies to reduce the rate of early leavers. These include a regular discussion of each learner with their learning and employment co-ordinator and employer, where appropriate, and offering a varying level of support and monitoring according to the learners' performance and attendance. There has been some recent improvement in achievement rates and in the sport and recreation area, but these have not yet had a significant effect on trends over a longer period of time or in all areas of learning.

36. The organisation's target-setting is weak on some courses. RCTS has only very recently set its own targets for retention and achievement rates and at area of learning level. These targets focus too heavily on leavers' rates, which makes it difficult for RCTS to identify and monitor trends over time. Some targets are unrealistic, considering last year's performance and the current number of early leavers. On childcare and business administration programmes, all the learners would now need to be retained for the next nine months for RCTS to achieve the annual target. RCTS did not achieve the recruitment target that they set for last year. Although targets exist for the progression of E2E learners into work and further training, RCTS has not set targets for progression onto their own work-based learning programmes.

37. The organisation's management of subcontractors is insufficient. RCTS subcontracts a small part of the E2E provision to Shaw Trust. A recently signed contract with Shaw Trust is inadequate, and does not cover the full range of activities that RCTS expects the subcontractor to carry out. Last year there was a subcontract with a local college for ESOL learners. There was no contract with the college. RCTS has since taken the decision to

deliver the ESOL provision itself. However, many of the learners that started with the subcontractor are making very slow progress, with some still working towards their previous learning goal, which includes entry level 1. There has been insufficient formal monitoring of these two subcontractors and of learners' progress. This issue currently only affects a small number of learners.

Equality of opportunity

Contributory grade 2

38. Promotion and understanding of equality of opportunity is good. Social inclusion is central to the ethos of RCTS and equality of opportunity is a priority in development plans. RCTS's staff have diverse backgrounds, age and gender for young people to relate to positively. Staff are skilled in helping young people to overcome their significant barriers to participation in learning and gaining employment. They make a thorough initial and continuous assessment of their individual support needs. All learners receive effective training in a well-planned equality and diversity session in their induction.

39. A good range of learning materials is available on the intranet that explore issues and challenges prejudices. This includes activities that reinforce understanding of diversity and equality. Rights and responsibilities are clearly stated in a revised learners' handbook and reinforced in agreement of ground rules in sessions. Tutors challenge negative attitudes. Learners know how and who to complain to if discrimination, bullying or harassment occur, although RCTS receives few complaints. Learners and staff treat each other with mutual respect. RCTS is involved in a multicultural festival each year and has creative ideas to interest young people in diversity, such as producing badges in other languages.

40. RCTS's arrangements to provide support for learners are helping them to remain on their programmes. All learners applying for a course are accepted, regardless of the complexity and extent of their needs. Staff are highly knowledgeable about individual learners and they share information about learners' needs. They help them to solve their problems. Staff who are qualified in counselling provide good support with health and welfare and other issues such as benefits and housing. They direct learners to specialist agencies.

41. Trained volunteers act as mentors to learners who are identified as needing support. Care is taken to match learners to an appropriate work placement. Work placements are carefully selected for the employers' supportive attitudes to learners with multiple disadvantages. RCTS helps employers to develop their policies and arrangements for ensuring equality of opportunity. The visits of learning and employment co-ordinators are arranged sensitively and flexibly to fit with learners' work patterns. A bi-lingual interpreter helps refugees to settle and supports their language learning. Leaflets are available in Arabic and Kurdish. However, a new range of subject-specific leaflets depict stereotypical images and there are insufficient simplified versions of key documents.

42. Staff development in equality of opportunity is regular and well planned. RCTS's managers plan training sessions effectively. They work with external trainers to carry out gap analyses in preparation for training. Policy and procedures for equality of opportunity of the parent organisation are reviewed at national level and locally, and are updated regularly. RCTS's response to the requirements of the Disability Discrimination Act 1995 is satisfactory. All facilities are accessible for use by people with restricted mobility. Each computer room has a workstation adapted for wheelchair users to use. Adaptations are made for learners and staff with sensory disabilities.

43. The collection of equal opportunities data is satisfactory and some analysis takes place. Twenty per cent of learners have a learning disability or difficulty. Sixty-four per cent of learners are women, although there is gender balance in E2E and New Deal provision. Seven per cent of learners are from minority ethnic groups, which is representative of the local area. RCTS analyses recruitment data, including details of those applicants who decide not to take up training. It analyses destination information. However, it does not use this data sufficiently to help develop self-assessment and development plans.

Quality improvement

Contributory grade 3

44. RCTS has good initiatives for quality improvements. It has a strong ethos of quality improvement, with staff regularly evaluating and improving their teaching and learning programmes. Many aspects of the learners' experience have been improved, including induction, the access to key skills support and the range of learning activities. RCTS has improved the support for learners considerably through the introduction of the mentoring scheme, added-value unit, skills for life strategy and the employment of a full-time interpreter. There has been considerable improvement since the previous inspection. Many of the weaknesses have been totally or partially rectified.

45. E2E courses are evaluated very regularly, with changes made to meet the changing needs of the learner groups. A recently introduced service-user course is carrying out a thorough evaluation of the E2E programme that will have an effect on future provision. The process for observing teaching and learning is thorough and results in improvement. RCTS's records of observation show a significant increase in the grade profile. Following observations, there is effective development planning, including attending teacher training courses.

46. Learners have good opportunities to give feedback, through questionnaires, focus groups, learners' representatives and informal procedures. RCTS analyses results of evaluation, which are discussed at senior management and team meetings. Analysis shows a high level of learners' satisfaction with their training and support. RCTS recognises that the response rate to some of the questionnaires has been low, and is now exploring alternative ways in which ESOL learners can give feedback. RCTS has appropriate policies for complaints and appeals, and it investigates and documents complaints thoroughly.

47. RCTS has appropriate arrangements for internal verification, and since the previous inspection has introduced sampling plans and strategies. Standardisation meetings are effective in sharing information about key skills and the use of paperwork. However, internal verification has not always identified issues where workplace supervisors have not signed paperwork.

48. Quality assurance arrangements, including the internal audit system, are ineffective in ensuring the consistency of some aspects of the work-based learning programmes. There is insufficient monitoring of much of the paperwork connected with these learners, including individual learning plans, employers' contracts and learners' progress reviews. An internal audit has identified issues with individual learning plans and progress reviews, but there has been insufficient follow-up in the subsequent six months. The organisation's arrangements for collecting employers' feedback are ineffective as a means of quality improvement. Questionnaires focus mainly on employers' understanding of some aspects of the programme and ensuring that they have received copies of RCT's policies. RCTS has

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recognised many of these issues in the senior management meetings and it is reviewing some of its quality assurance and improvement systems.

49. Staff are fully involved in the self-assessment process and have a good awareness of the self-assessment quality improvement plan, which it reviews regularly. The previous year's self-assessment has resulted in improvement, in particular in the framework achievement rates on sport and recreation. However, self-assessment is insufficiently self-critical and in some areas of learning there are few or no identified weaknesses. Some key weaknesses were missed in self-assessment. Some identified strengths are no more than normal practice. RCTS has used data less effectively in this year's self-assessment than in previous years to make reliable and appropriate judgements.

AREAS OF LEARNING

Health, public services and care

Grade 3

Contributory areas:	Number of learners	Contributory grade
Social care Apprenticeships for young people	34	3
Early years Apprenticeships for young people	22	3

50. RCTS provides NVQ programmes in care and early years at levels 1 to 3. Fifty-six learners are on these programmes, of whom 20 are advanced apprentices, 29 are apprentices, and seven learners are on NVQ training. In care, there are 15 advanced apprentices, 18 apprentices, and three learners are following NVQ training. Four of the 33 apprentices are men. In early years, there are five advanced apprentices, 12 apprentices, and five learners on NVQ training. Only one is a man. Learners attend the Venture Tower centre for their off-the-job training, usually at fortnightly intervals. In some cases, off-the-job training is delivered in the workplace. Most learners are directly employed in nurseries, early years settings, residential or nursing homes, day centres or centres supporting independent living. RCTS has six assessors, who also provide training. There are two internal verifiers, with one care assessor working towards the qualification.

Strengths

- good development of learners' workplace skills
- well-planned off-the-job training and good teaching
- good support and guidance of learners

Weaknesses

- low achievement of frameworks
- insufficient involvement of some employers in reviews and training

Achievement and standards

51. The development of learners' workplace skills is good. Their occupational practice has improved as a result of their learning. Learners introduce new and positive ways of working into the workplace and these improvements are recorded in their reviews with employers, such as how they manage difficult behaviour. Learners grow in confidence. Most learners' portfolios are well organised. The standard of work is generally satisfactory and some is good.

52. The learners' achievement of the full framework is low, particularly on programmes in early years. Progress towards completion is also slow. Of the 30 advanced apprentices who started in the years 2002, 2003 and 2004, only one successfully completed the programme. In the same years, only one of the 37 apprentices completed the programme successfully. Learners' achievements on the care programmes over the same period are slightly better but overall remain unsatisfactory. Eight of 29 advanced apprentices

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successfully completed, and 16 of the 54 apprentices completed. Achievement of the NVQ is good for those who remain in training. There has been poor retention historically. However, NVQ achievement is improving from 25 per cent in 2001-02 to 30 per cent and 39 per cent in the following two years. Recent quality initiatives are effective and there are indications that current learners are making better progress towards their qualifications. As part of a new focus for most learners to gain key skills, training is provided earlier and the support unit gives individual help. The introduction of online testing has resulted in higher achievement of test passes at levels 1 and 2.

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

LSC funded work-based learning																
Advanced apprenticeships	2004-05		2003-04		2002-03		2001-02		2000-01							
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Number of starts	7		33		19	100	7	100	1	100						
Retained*	0		17		9	47	1	14	3	300						
Successfully completed	0		5		4	21	1	14	1	100						
Still in learning	7		13		0	0	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

LSC funded work-based learning																
Apprenticeships	2004-05		2003-04		2002-03		2001-02		2000-01							
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Number of starts	32		25		32	100	20	100	2	100						
Retained*	6		19		15	47	9	45	2	100						
Successfully completed	2		8		7	22	5	25	1	50						
Still in learning	25		4		0	0	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

LSC funded work-based learning																
NVQ Training	2004-05		2003-04		2002-03		2001-02									
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Number of starts	14		23	100	10	100	4	100								
Retained*	2		11	48	5	50	1	25								
Successfully completed	2		9	39	3	30	1	25								
Still in learning	7		0	0	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

The quality of provision

53. Off-the-job training is well planned and the standard of teaching is good. The introduction of the technical certificate at an early stage of the learners' programmes enables learners to understand more quickly how they can use the content for the key skills and NVQ components of their programmes. Schemes of work and lesson plans clearly

identify learning objectives, which are shared with learners and evaluated at the end of the day. Teaching includes a good variety of activities to sustain the learners' concentration. RCTS makes good links between off-the-job activities and learners' job roles to support learning and maintain interest. There are frequent checks on learning and understanding. Tutors have succeeded in creating a positive environment in which learners are confident to apply themselves. Many employers provide additional training opportunities of relevance to the learners' NVQ programmes.

54. The individual support and guidance that learners receive are good. Initial assessment includes an assessment of their literacy and numeracy skills and helps assessors to provide appropriate support based on sound knowledge of the learners' individual needs. Learning and employment co-ordinators visit the learners in their workplace to check their progress and set targets for their next visit, usually each fortnight. Many learners receive additional visits to enable them to succeed. The introduction of the RAG system has already been beneficial to some learners who have fallen behind with their work. RCTS integrates literacy and numeracy support with the off-the-job training and visits to learners. Separate literacy and numeracy support is available if this is more appropriate. In some cases, RCTS delivers off-the-job training in the workplace to meet the needs of learners and employers. Weekly drop-in times are available for learners to access computers or seek advice and guidance on assignments. Other support services are provided for learners to obtain advice and guidance on financial and personal matters. Many employers are very committed to training and some provide extra study time within the work rota.

55. Internal verification and assessment practices are sound. Assessors are beginning to use a good variety of assessment methods to meet the needs of learners who find writing difficult. There are regular standardisation meetings. Assessors are observed as part of the quality assurance process and RCTS monitors the learners' progress carefully. Resources and accommodation are satisfactory. There are some limitations in the range and quality of the resources available to support teaching. In partnership with two colleges, RCTS is involved in developing the recently approved CoVE in care.

56. There is insufficient involvement of some employers in the three-monthly reviews of learners' progress. They value the skills that the learners gain and their positive effect on the workplace but do not know the timescale expected for completion of the qualification. Some have little knowledge of the NVQ programme and its requirements and are unaware of how well the learner is progressing. They make little contribution to the training. Others are involved and play a full part in facilitating the learners' progress.

Leadership and management

57. Both the care and early years teams work closely together and are supportive of each other. Staff are enthusiastic and committed to improving the quality of the learners' experience. They carry out regular staff development to support this commitment. Issues regarding equality of opportunity and diversity support the care and early years programmes and are covered appropriately. Staff contribute to the judgements in the self-assessment process, but not to the grading. The judgements in the self-assessment report were found to be partially accurate. Some strengths were over stated, and the implications of achievement data were not fully recognised. Recent quality assurance initiatives indicate improvements in the progress of current learners but full outcomes are yet to emerge.

Leisure, travel and tourism**Grade 2**

Contributory areas:	Number of learners	Contributory grade
<i>Sport, leisure and recreation</i>		2
Apprenticeships for young people	32	2

58. At the time of inspection there were 32 learners following programmes in sport and leisure. Four learners are advanced apprentices and 28 are apprentices who are following programmes in operational services and gym instruction. The programmes are delivered across 13 work-placement providers. Off-the-job training takes place at the organisation's main training centres. Learners are recruited through Connexions, school, employers and self-referrals. Learners can enrol in training at any time of year. The performance-led pathway has been introduced to allow learners to develop occupational skills that lead to places in employment and onto the apprenticeship scheme. Learners' progress reviews are carried out in the workplace, and used to set targets. RCTS's assessor carries out assessment and reviews in the workplace and in off-the-job training. All learners are now working towards key skills qualifications and the technical certificate as part of their framework.

Sport, leisure and recreation**Grade 2***Strengths*

- good and improving achievement rates
- good development of skills and understanding in off-the-job training
- very effective measures to improve learners' achievement rates
- high-quality work placements

Weaknesses

- ineffective target-setting to promote learners' progress

Achievement and standards

59. Achievement rates for learners on sport and recreation apprenticeship programmes are good and improving. In 2001-02, 27 per cent of learners starting achieved their full framework. The pass rate for the framework improved to 40 per cent in 2002-03 and 58 per cent in 2003-04, with 25 per cent still in learning. Eighty-nine per cent of those who began their programme in 2004-05 are still in learning. Progress in key skills and earlier achievement of technical certificates is improving.

60. Learners in sport instructing reach a high standard of practical skills, above the standard expected for the stage and level of the programme. They are able to demonstrate skill in teaching and coaching in preparation for circuit-training classes as a result of effective off-the-job training. Learners show good knowledge of joint movements and are able to name and explain the types of movement. They demonstrate good knowledge of a range of exercises and the technical language used to describe movement. Their portfolios are satisfactory and contain a range of evidence linked to their performance. A number of

learners report developing more advanced skills in circuit training and working with children.

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

LSC funded work-based learning																	
Advanced apprenticeships	2004-05		2003-04		2002-03												
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	
Number of starts	4		1	100	10	100											
Retained*	0		0	0	4	40											
Successfully completed	0		0	0	1	10											
Still in learning	4		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

LSC funded work-based learning																	
Apprenticeships	2004-05		2003-04		2002-03		2001-02										
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	
Number of starts	28		12		15	100	9	100									
Retained*	6		9		10	67	5	56									
Successfully completed	0		7		6	40	3	33									
Still in learning	25		3		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

The quality of provision

61. Learners receive satisfactory on- and off-the-job training. This is well planned and structured to meet the needs of learners. Team teaching is effective in off-the-job training. RCTS uses thorough and detailed handbooks to support learning and provide the learners with effective opportunities to gather the evidence they need to pass their NVQs. These sessions thoroughly cover jobsearch, and employment rights and responsibilities. A video recorded in-house explores recruitment issues. Key skills teaching is integrated effectively. Co-ordination and planning of on- and off-the-job training and liaison with employers varies.

62. The assessment process is satisfactory. There are two assessors working in sport and recreation and they make flexible arrangements to visit learners. These visits are frequent and regular. Assessments are effectively planned and targets set. Learners receive good feedback that encourages and motivates them. Some employers are trained assessors and they are able to provide assessment in the workplace. In some cases, evidence is the result of assessor observation, with very little use of witness statements.

63. Support for the learners is satisfactory. They receive reviews of their progress every two weeks. Personal action plans are completed during the reviews. RCTS uses the RAG system to highlight those learners who need extra support. Reviews take place at different times for those at different stages. Where additional learning needs are identified, learners receive suitable specialist support. This includes support for key skills provided by the added-value unit staff.

64. Target-setting to promote progress is ineffective. Some learners are unaware of their targets for the key skills element of their framework and their NVQ targets. Some learners with exemption from key skills were unsure of what they had exemption from and what they had to do. New learners are unaware of completion dates. Learners do not have access to a framework overview that gives them information about their overall success. There is a framework map but this is completed at the end of their training. There is insufficient use of individual learning plans in review meetings.

Leadership and management

65. RCTS has taken very effective action to improve learners' achievement rates. The appointment of the qualifications and framework manager has led to an improvement in pass rates. Framework monitoring is now regular and routine, and examines progress on the framework on an individual basis. There is now dedicated key skills support for learners. Learners who are identified as needing extra support are referred to the organisation's added-value unit.

66. Work placements are of a high quality. The range of contemporary modern placements that offer a range of opportunities and settings in which to develop skills is good. Working environments include very good exercise studios, swimming pools and administrative facilities. Learners have good opportunities to develop skills in these settings. There is good support for learners in work placements. They have good access to specialist equipment such as body fat analysers and heart rate monitors for the assessment and monitoring of fitness.

67. Communication in this area of learning is effective. Staff and managers have regular and well-planned meetings. The intranet is informative and staff use electronic communication to update each other. There are regular meetings of the sport and recreation consortium of employers. At these meetings, employers are updated on changes to the apprenticeship framework, candidate achievement and internal verification. Learners' feedback has become a recent feature of these meetings. Meetings are not always fully attended by employers.

68. Staff qualifications are satisfactory. They have good occupational qualifications in sport and coaching, including squash, life-guarding, dance, and sports leadership. All staff are qualified assessors and have teaching status.

69. Self-assessment is satisfactory. The self-assessment report identifies many of the strengths found at inspection. The plan identifies the organisation's key challenges and develops quality improvement initiatives.

70. Internal verification is satisfactory and meets awarding body requirements. There is one internal verifier working on the sport programmes who has appropriate occupational expertise. It is well planned and records contain constructive feedback to assessors.

71. Quality monitoring is incomplete. Signatures of employers' staff are missing from learners' evidence and this has invalidated some evidence in a number of their portfolios.

Preparation for life and work**Grade 3**

Contributory areas:	Number of learners	Contributory grade
<i>Employability training</i>		3
New Deal for young people	72	3
Entry to Employment	80	3

72. RCTS provides preparation for life and work programmes for 152 learners. Eighty learners are on the E2E programme and 72 participants are on the New Deal for young people programme. Forty-eight learners are on full-time education and training and 25 are on basic employability training. Following their referral by Connexions or Jobcentre Plus, all learners attend RCTS for an induction programme. They are informed of the learning options open to them and an individual timetable is negotiated with them. There are 35 learners from E2E and New Deal on a special ESOL programme.

73. Learners on the E2E programme follow individual programmes weekly, which may include literacy, numeracy, jobsearch, drama, creative writing, outdoor activities, citizenship or independent living skills. Currently seven learners are on a YMtB programme. Learners can gain work experience from work placements with local employers and can work towards an NVQ. Learners on the New Deal programme are supported in finding a work placement or employment. They also work towards NVQs and take additional qualifications.

74. All learners receive additional support to improve their literacy and numeracy skills and some are entered for a literacy or numeracy qualification. They take key skills qualifications where appropriate. Learners gain additional qualifications in food hygiene, health and safety, first aid and a basic computer literacy course. Learners on the E2E programme attend for up to 22 weeks for a minimum of 16 hours each week, while learners on the New Deal programme attend for 30 hours each week for up to 52 weeks. The E2E programme is managed by a supported learning manager with a team of six learning and employment co-ordinators, while the New Deal programme is provided by a co-ordinator and four learning and employment co-ordinators. There are six staff with specific responsibilities for skills for life training. New appointments of staff have been made to support the skills for life provision, including a full-time interpreter.

Employability training**Grade 3***Strengths*

- good activities to develop workplace skills
- particularly effective preparation for employment
- particularly good personal support

Weaknesses

- inadequate target-setting
- inadequate planning of ESOL provision

Achievement and standards

75. Learners' attendance is satisfactory. During the inspection, the attendance rate was 75 per cent. The attendance for E2E learners in 2004-05 was 89 per cent and for New Deal participants 91 per cent. RCTS monitors attendance carefully and accounts for and records all non-attendance. Attainment in most classes is satisfactory. The skills attained are relevant to learners' individual needs. Learners in a numeracy class measure the size of display boxes before calculating their volume. They use excel spreadsheets to prepare graphs and charts when analysing the responses to questionnaires. In a jobsearch class they list the main aspects to consider when preparing themselves for an interview.

76. Progression rates for E2E learners are now satisfactory. Thirty-five per cent of learners have successfully completed the programme in 2004-05, with 49 of these learners still in training. This is an improvement on 2003-04, when 26 per cent progressed from the programme. These figures include YMtB learners who leave to give birth. Progress in learning for these learners is good. Their portfolios are well organised and the standard of work is good. One learner has progressed into midwifery after training at RCTS and returns as a volunteer to encourage other young mothers.

77. Of those participants retained on the New Deal programme in 2003-04, 68 per cent completed and 43 per cent gained employment. In 2004-05, 49 per cent completed the programme and there are still 54 participants in training. Since April 2005, 49 per cent of retained participants have gained employment. RCTS has good strategies to support improvements, including the skills for life programme and mentor service. Retention is improving.

78. All learners can access additional qualifications in health and safety, food hygiene, and first aid, as well as qualifications in literacy, numeracy and language. However, RCTS enters too few of these learners for these qualifications, although all of those entered pass them. In 2004-05, 85 learners achieved at least one pass in national tests. Twenty-two learners gained no literacy, numeracy or language qualification.

79. The following table shows the progression rates for E2E. No table is shown for New Deal for young people, as the data available is unreliable.

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

LSC funded work-based learning																
Entry to Employment	2005-06		2004-05		2003-04		2002-03		2001-02							
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%								
Number of starts	28		174		147		157		35	100						
Progression ¹	4		71		55		72		24	69						
Achieved objectives ²	4		61		38		53		12	34						
Still in learning	23		49		7		1		0	0						

1. Measured in terms of learners' movement to further training, education or employment, during or after their training

2. These being the key objectives identified for each learner while on E2E

The quality of provision

80. The training programmes provide good activities to develop the learners' workplace skills. They learn how to express themselves better, to work in teams and develop their evaluation skills. For example, learners take part in drama and creative writing sessions. A short course in evaluation helps learners to gain skills in presenting information, collating data, communicating with colleagues and tutors, and making suggestions for improvements to RCTS. Learners also take part in outdoor pursuits and sports activities to develop their team working skills. The well-planned curriculum for small groups of learners on the YMtB programme, including visiting speakers and outings, is particularly effective.

81. Learners are particularly well prepared for employment. They take part in jobsearch and interview preparation sessions. During their induction period, if learners are ready, a learning and employment co-ordinator matches them to an appropriate work placement. RCTS has good contacts with a wide range of local employers who receive a comprehensive information pack about the provider, the training programme and the learner. Employers are impressed by the way learners conduct themselves at their interview and are committed to their work.

82. RCTS provides a good range of work placements. For example, a childcare placement in a daycentre for children with disabilities or learning difficulties, a business administration placement in a large showroom leading to progression opportunities in the accounts department. A learning and employment co-ordinator monitors and reviews learners' progress every four weeks. RCTS encourages and supports its learners to negotiate potential employment with their employer. However, there is insufficient communication and liaison between the learning and employment co-ordinator and the vocational assessors who assess the learners' progress towards their NVQ.

83. Individual support for the learners is particularly good. RCTS's staff are highly committed and provide a welcoming and supportive learning environment. They gain a thorough knowledge of the learners' individual needs. RCTS makes effective arrangements to provide the learners with additional support in their work placements. It arranges varying attendance times for visits and reviews to suit the learners' shift patterns and personal circumstances.

84. In the centres, attendance and choice of training options are arranged flexibly according to individual learners' interests and needs. Learners can attend skills for life support sessions and the added-value unit to obtain help. If appropriate, RCTS carefully matches them with trained volunteer mentors. Appointments with a Connexions personal adviser can be made on four days each week on site. RCTS has good links with partners and specialist agencies. Learners on the YMtB programme and asylum seekers receive particularly good support. The appointment of a full-time interpreter has a good effect in helping the learners to settle.

85. Teaching and learning are satisfactory. Eighty per cent of the lessons observed were satisfactory or better. Some lessons challenge learners to solve problems or learn new vocabulary. Classes are well managed and all learners take turns to ask or respond to questions. Induction sessions are well planned and RCTS makes good use of an in-house video. E2E learners enjoy their lessons. E2E and New Deal learners attend skills for life sessions and work together well. Tutors make good use of pair work. Learners make good

progress. For example, they describe their ability to read aloud to their children with confidence.

86. In better lessons, classroom management is good and all learners are engaged in their learning. However, some lesson plans lack a breakdown of learning objectives and activities. Lessons are sometimes poorly paced. In some lessons, tutors encourage learners to chat and inhibit them from remaining focused on their tasks. Although some classes make use of computers and tutors bring in relevant and attractive resources, many classes rely mainly on paper-based materials and whiteboards.

87. Target-setting in individual learning plans is ineffective. The targets are often vague and they are not linked to the learners' learning or employment goals. Individual learning plans do not always record the achievements of the learners, or progress with NVQs. Individual learning plans do not record the NVQ units achieved. Targets for ESOL learners do not contain language learning targets and their progress is not monitored. Some learners make slow progress, for example one learner in training for nine months has not yet passed an exam. Learners on the E2E programme complete a monitoring sheet at the end of each session, but few tutors provide learners with feedback on their performance.

88. The ESOL provision, recently withdrawn from a subcontractor arrangement and provided in-house, is inadequate. Although the skills for life provision has recently been reorganised, insufficient time has been given to planning a relevant programme for ESOL learners. There are no course plans. Lesson plans do not contain detailed language learning objectives or timed activities, which would ensure that the learners improve their language skills. Language learning is not linked to the employment context. Much of the teaching is inadequate. Learning materials are not appropriate for the learners' language level and no adaptations are made to these materials. Tutors rely excessively on photocopied handouts and whiteboards. Many learners do not have access to computer classes. The initial assessment of learners does not identify their previous educational achievements.

Leadership and management

89. The management of the programmes is satisfactory. Each team has regular weekly meetings to discuss new learners and any issues arising with the learners in training. There are full staff meetings each month in which staff discuss organisational issues and policy implementation. Teamwork at RCTS is good and benefits the learners. All staff have monthly appraisal meetings, during which training needs are identified. Access to staff development programmes is good. For example, a number of staff have recently attended a course on personal safety. RCTS has recently invested considerably in skills for life staff, support services and facilities, including a new ICT facility at the new centre.

90. All learners receive training in equality of opportunity during their induction. Learners feel secure that there is no bullying in the organisation and for the many who were severely bullied at school this is a very important concern. However, there is no recording or checking of their understanding of equal opportunities during reviews.

