

INSPECTION REPORT

Eclipse Training Limited

04 November 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*

INSPECTION REPORT

Eclipse Training Limited

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INSPECTION REPORT

DESCRIPTION OF THE PROVIDER

1. Eclipse Training Limited (ETL) was established in 1999. It is based in Irchester, Northamptonshire, in a small office, in the managing director's house, used only for administration. Training, when it takes place, is normally carried out in the workplace using employers' facilities. ETL currently offers training for advanced apprentices and apprentices in business administration and customer service. There are 27 learners in administration and 23 in customer service. All the learners are employed. ETL has two full-time members of staff, who are the managing director and the commercial director.

2. ETL recruits learners throughout the Bedfordshire area. In September 2005 the unemployment rate in Bedfordshire and Luton was 1.6 per cent, compared with 2.3 per cent nationally. The 2001 census shows that the proportion of people in the area from minority ethnic groups is 6.7 per cent, compared with 9.1 per cent nationally. The proportion of school leavers achieving five or more general certificates of secondary education at grade C or above in 2004 in Bedfordshire was 51.2 per cent, compared with 53.7 per cent nationally.

3. ETL was previously inspected in 2002 and a quality monitoring visit was carried out in 2003.

OVERALL EFFECTIVENESS

Grade 4

4. **The overall effectiveness of the provision is inadequate.** More specifically, ETL's leadership and management and its arrangements for equality of opportunity and quality improvement are inadequate. Provision is inadequate in business administration and law.

5. **The inspection team had some confidence in the reliability of the self-assessment process.** The self-assessment process does include employers' and learners' feedback. While the report does identify some of the strengths and weaknesses identified by inspectors, it is not sufficiently critical of some of the key aspects of the provision.

6. **The provider has demonstrated that it is in a poor position to make improvements.** The quality of the provision has in some key aspects not improved since the previous inspection. In particular from 2001 to 2003 retention and achievement rates in administration fell and rates in customer service have not significantly improved. Inspectors gave a lower grade for administration than that at the previous inspection. ETL makes little use of external bodies to analyse the programme critically and make improvements.

KEY CHALLENGES FOR ECLIPSE TRAINING LIMITED:

- continue to improve retention and achievement rates
- improve the quarterly review process

- continue to develop relationships with employers
- continue to improve key aspects of the programme
- clarify long-term business planning processes

GRADES

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

Leadership and management		4
Contributory grades:		
Equality of opportunity		4
Quality improvement		4

Business administration and law			4
Contributory areas:	Number of learners	Contributory grade	
Administration		4	
Apprenticeships for young people	28	4	
Customer service		3	
Apprenticeships for young people	23	3	

ABOUT THE INSPECTION

7. All aspects of ETL's provision were inspected.

Number of inspectors	4
Number of inspection days	12
Number of learners interviewed	19
Number of staff interviewed	5
Number of employers interviewed	12
Number of locations/sites/learning centres visited	14

KEY FINDINGS

Achievements and standards

8. The rate at which administration learners have left their programmes early since 2004-05 is low. Of the 23 learners who have started programmes in this period, only one has left without completing their framework.
9. Learners in customer service and administration develop good workplace skills.

Learners have increased in self-confidence since the start of their programme. They make extensive use of knowledge gained from national vocational qualification (NVQ) performance criteria in their job role. Most learners are able to relate learnt skills to a wider business environment. The development of background knowledge is good, particularly in relation to applying and understanding the reasons for organisational policies.

10. The retention and achievement rates in customer service are satisfactory. Of the 48 advanced apprentices starting programmes since 2002-03, 25 per cent have completed the framework and 55 per cent are still in learning. Current learners are making satisfactory progress.

11. The retention and achievement rates in administration were unsatisfactory during 2001 to 2003, when they ranged from zero per cent to 44 per cent. Learners who have started programmes since 2004 are making satisfactory progress.

The quality of provision

Grades given to learning sessions

	Grade 1	Grade 2	Grade 3	Grade 4	Total
Business administration and law	0	0	3	0	3
Total	0	0	3	0	3

12. Good use is made of short-term actions plans in customer service. ETL's staff complete an assessment and review document at the end of each learner visit. This document gives a detailed record of achievements made by that visit and targets that have been set for the next visit. Targets are clear and achievable. Usually, between four and eight action points are set, depending upon the work that each point involves. Where learners do not meet targets, staff and learners fully discuss the reasons for this before agreeing revised target dates. However, in administration, some short-term target-setting is not sufficiently challenging.

13. **In administration, ETL has good relationships with employers.** It fully understands the employers' business requirements and correctly matches learners and qualifications to meet the employers' needs. Learners can choose optional NVQ units to fit their job roles.

14. The quality of training is satisfactory. Staff successfully relate the skills they are teaching to the workplace. Handouts are clear and easy to follow, and learners' understanding is regularly checked. ETL supports learners with literacy and numeracy skills development needs through its provision of key skills training.

15. **The use of progress reviews is poor.** Reviewers make no reference to previous progress reviews or the individual learning plan. There is little reinforcement of health and safety and equality of opportunity, and little testing of understanding. Reviewers do ask questions on these topics but learners' answers are often cursory and have too little depth for their knowledge to be determined effectively.

16. Employers of customer service learners have insufficient involvement in planning training and assessment. Although employers attend learners' progress reviews, they have little input in planning the progress of the learners. Many learners complete training provided by the employer, both on and off the job, but this is not always included as part of

the learners' portfolios of evidence and little account is taken of it in planning assessment activity.

Leadership and management

17. **ETL works well in partnership with its employers.** It has a network of employers whose businesses are well understood by staff at ETL. Employers are committed to the success of programmes offered by ETL and support them appropriately. Much of the recruitment is of existing employees in the workforce, although some potential learners are referred from Connexions. When this is the case, ETL uses its network of employers to gain employment for apprentices.

18. **ETL uses management information systems particularly well to guide decision-making.** It keeps good records of learners' progress and closely monitors projected target dates of achievement and financial records. Good record-keeping enables ETL to have full programme occupancy at all times and to plan training and assessment efficiently.

19. **Employers' equal opportunities policies are monitored well.** ETL risk-assesses employers' arrangements with regard to equality of opportunity. It uses a useful checklist with employers to ascertain whether they have an equal opportunities policy and whether it is appropriate and up to date. Where there is a shortfall in the equal opportunities arrangements, an action plan with agreed deadlines is produced and is promptly followed up.

20. **Some learners have experienced poor timekeeping and attendance by ETL staff for their workplace visits.** While no employer has ever experienced a cancelled appointment without prior notification, from time to time staff at ETL have either rescheduled previously agreed appointments or have arrived late for their visit.

21. **ETL carries out insufficient long-term business planning.** ETL does have an annual development plan but there is little identification by the company of how it will meet or work towards its vision and long-term strategies. Business planning currently only identifies how annual contractual requirements will be met and not how the organisation will develop.

22. **Some of ETL's reinforcement of equality of opportunity with learners and employers is weak.** The questions that staff ask learners at progress reviews are not searching enough for the staff to be confident that learners have an adequate understanding of equality of opportunity.

23. **Some aspects of the programmes have not improved during the past three years.** For example, ETL's quality assurance systems and procedures have not improved retention and achievement rates in customer service. The quality of teaching has not improved, and for a two-year period, retention and achievement rates in administration fell to unsatisfactory levels.

Leadership and management

Strengths

- good partnership working with employers
- good use of management information systems
- particularly effective monitoring of employers' equal opportunities policies

Weaknesses

- poor timekeeping and attendance on some workplace visits by ETL's staff
- insufficient long-term business planning
- some poor reinforcement of equality of opportunity in the workplace
- insufficient improvement of key aspects of the programme

Business administration and law

Administration

Grade 4

Strengths

- good relationships with employers

Weaknesses

- poor use of progress reviews

Customer service

Grade 3

Strengths

- no significant strengths identified

Weaknesses

- poor use of progress reviews

WHAT LEARNERS LIKE ABOUT ECLIPSE TRAINING LIMITED:

- the level of support
- the easy-to-follow training materials
- getting lots of praise
- the high level of contact
- the opportunity to gain qualifications while at work
- the professional approach by ETL's staff

WHAT LEARNERS THINK ECLIPSE TRAINING LIMITED COULD IMPROVE:

- the rate of progress
- the level of challenge
- the amount of paperwork

DETAILED INSPECTION FINDINGS

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

Grade 4

Strengths

- good partnership working with employers
- good use of management information systems
- particularly effective monitoring of employers' equal opportunities policies

Weaknesses

- poor timekeeping and attendance on some workplace visits by ETL's staff
- insufficient long-term business planning
- some poor reinforcement of equality of opportunity in the workplace
- insufficient improvement of key aspects of the programme

24. ETL works well in partnership with its employers. It has a network of employers whose businesses are well understood by staff at ETL. Employers are committed to the programmes offered by ETL and support them appropriately. Initial work with new employers is thorough. ETL ensures that employers' staff have a good understanding of programme requirements and are involved from the outset in the design of the learners' programmes. However, ETL has not fully explored the more appropriate new framework opportunities available in the high technology industries in which a number of its employers operate. Most of ETL's learners are recruited as existing employees in the workforce, although some potential learners are referred from Connexions. When this is the case, ETL uses its network of employers to gain employment for apprentices.

25. ETL uses management information systems particularly well to guide its decision-making. It keeps good records of learners' progress, and closely monitors projected target dates of achievement and financial records. Good record-keeping enables ETL to have full programme occupancy at all times and to plan training and assessment efficiently. The directors formally review the progress of their programmes each month and record their discussions on a constantly updated development plan.

26. The company has recently devised but not yet used a strategy to support literacy, numeracy and English language skills. For a number of years, ETL has supported learners with these needs through the development of their key skills, with most learners entering the programmes with at least level 1 skills. However, ETL has recognised that skills development would be improved for a few learners by the use of specialist practitioners. It has recently developed a strategy with an external organisation which is able to provide this support.

27. While no employer has ever experienced a cancelled appointment without prior notification, from time to time staff at ETL have either rescheduled previously agreed appointments or have arrived late for their visit at some companies. Employers and learners wish to see this aspect of the programme improved. Learners who have prepared portfolio work for a set date are disappointed when their visit by the assessor is postponed. When ETL's staff are late for an appointment employers report that this can be disruptive to

other aspects of their business.

28. ETL carries out insufficient long-term business planning. The company does have an annual and a three-year development plan but there is little identification of how ETL will meet or work towards its vision and long-term strategies. Business planning currently only identifies how annual contractual requirements will be met and not how the organisation will develop.

Equality of opportunity

Contributory grade 4

29. ETL carries out good monitoring of employers' equal opportunities policies. It risk-assesses employers' arrangements with regard to equality of opportunity. A useful checklist is used with employers to ascertain whether they have an equal opportunities policy and whether it is appropriate and up to date. Where there is a shortfall in the equal opportunities arrangements, an action plan with agreed deadlines is produced and is followed up promptly. ETL ensures a copy of the equal opportunities policy of each employer is kept on file and reminds employers of the need to keep their policies up to date. Employers' and learners' general awareness of equality and diversity is low, but several initiatives have been successful in raising their awareness of equality of opportunity. For example, the contractual agreement between the employers and ETL is clear in its expectations of employers with regard to anti-discrimination.

30. ETL's equal opportunities policy has been updated to include reference to current legislation such as the Disability Discrimination Act 1995. The company's development plan emphasises its commitment to recruit from under-represented groups. Initiatives to recruit learners from under-represented groups have been successful. ETL had no minority ethnic groups at the time of the previous inspection but now has nine such learners on the programme. Minority ethnic group members now participate in programmes at a rate similar to their representation in the local communities in which ETL offers its programmes. ETL monitors the participation and achievement rates of learners by their ethnicity, disability and by their gender. Men are still under-represented in customer service programmes. ETL's strategy to meet learners' language skills support needs is not yet in place.

31. Some reinforcement of equality of opportunity with learners and employers is weak. The questions that staff ask at the progress reviews are insufficiently searching for staff to be confident that learners have an adequate understanding of equality of opportunity. Discussions focus on questions checking whether work such as the induction workbook and the equal opportunities assignment has been completed. Staff make insufficient checks to ascertain the effectiveness of this activity in improving learners' understanding of their rights and responsibilities. In some instances, more detailed questions are asked to enquire if the learner has experienced bullying or harassment in the workplace. This does not ensure that learners are clear about the policies, procedures and action that they should take before bullying becomes a problem. One learner who had experienced harassment at work felt that, had she known that she could discuss a problem without fearing reprisal, she would have spoken out before the situation had become untenable.

Quality improvement

Contributory grade 4

32. ETL has made some minor improvements in the provision since the previous inspection. For example it has improved some aspects of its arrangements for equality of opportunity, although they were unsatisfactory at the previous inspection and remain unsatisfactory overall. The company's analysis and use of data has improved. It uses data

on early leavers to guide its action. For example, it identified that a high percentage of learners who dropped out of their programmes did so because of a lack of commitment to the programme. ETL has now changed the emphasis when introducing potential learners to the programme, reinforcing the time and work that is involved when undertaking the qualifications. While strategies to improve retention rates have started to have an effect, there has been insufficient improvement in achievement rates, particularly in administration.

33. Formal feedback is collected annually. ETL issues questionnaires to employers and learners to collect their feedback. The rate of return was low in 2004-05, with only 18 of the 42 questionnaires issued to learners and only nine of the 21 issued to employers receiving a response. Disappointed with the response, ETL has considered using other strategies.

34. The two directors carry out observations of each other's teaching. Since October 2004 one director has been observed once and the other twice. Brief comments and feedback are given, but these do not contribute to improving the quality of the teaching. No overall clear judgement is made on the quality of the teaching, and no action plan results from these observations. Inspectors observed three teaching sessions, all of which were satisfactory. The company has not made use of alternative strategies to benchmark the quality of the provision or looked at using best practice from external bodies.

35. Internal verification was a strength at the previous inspection and is now satisfactory. The planning and sampling of assessment practice meets the requirements of the awarding body. The feedback from the internal verifier to the assessor is mainly positive. There is no evidence that the internal verification processes are leading to improvement in the quality of assessment. The internal verifier's interview with the learner makes no reference to ensuring that the learner understands the appeals procedure or has fair access to assessment. Although ETL has an access and fair assessment policy it does not share this with the learners. The appeals procedure is issued to learners, but some learners are unsure of its purpose. ETL has not designated a person to deal with the appeals procedure. This was raised at the previous inspection but has not yet been dealt with.

36. The company produced its most recent self-assessment report in January 2005. The report uses a range of evidence, including the views of learners and employers, which was highlighted in the previous inspection. ETL self-assessed quality assurance rather than quality improvement and the strengths it claimed were not supported by good evidence. The report is insufficiently critical and it is not clear how the key areas identified in the report are dealt with in the development plan. Some of the planned actions are not specific enough for it to be determined whether they will bring about improvements.

AREAS OF LEARNING

Business administration and law

Grade 4

Contributory areas:	Number of learners	Contributory grade
Administration Apprenticeships for young people	28	4 4
Customer service Apprenticeships for young people	23	3 3

37. Fifty-one learners are following apprenticeships or advanced apprenticeships in business administration and law. Of these, 23 are on customer service programmes and 28 are on administration programmes. All the learners recruited since September 2003 are working towards a technical certificate. Most learners are recruited through internal marketing from employers or potential employers and all are employed. All learners attend on-the-job training given by ETL or the employer at the employer's premises. Learners may join the programme at various times of the year. An assessor visits learners in the workplace every three or four weeks to carry out assessment and to guide learners in portfolio-building.

Administration

Grade 4

Strengths

- good relationships with employers

Weaknesses

- poor use of progress reviews

Achievement and standards

38. Development of workplace skills is good. Learners gain relevant skills in information technology (IT) and communications from their key skills training. They make effective use of communication skills in dealing with other organisations and work colleagues. Their self-confidence has increased since the start of their programme. Learners make good use of knowledge gained from NVQ performance criteria in their job role. Most learners are able to relate learnt skills to a wider business environment. Their development of background knowledge is good, particularly in relation to applying and understanding the reasons for organisational policies. Line managers recognise the improvements in work efficiency of learners and their personal development.

39. Retention and achievement rates for learners starting between 2001 and 2003 were poor. They ranged from zero per cent to 43 per cent for apprentices starting in this period and decreased from 44 to 40 per cent for advanced apprentices. However, the rate of early leaving for learners starting programmes since 2004 has improved. Since 2003-04, four learners starting advanced apprenticeships and one starting an apprenticeship have left before the end of their programme. ETL recognised before 2004 that too many learners were leaving the programme early and has implemented a strategy to improve retention.

Learners starting programmes since 2004 are making satisfactory progress towards framework completion. Six learners are expected to complete within one month of the inspection.

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

LSC funded work-based learning																
Advanced apprenticeships	2005-06		2004-05		2003-04		2002-03		2001-02							
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Number of starts	2		13		13		10	100	16	100						
Retained*	0		1		4		4	40	7	44						
Successfully completed	0		1		4		4	40	7	44						
Still in learning	2		12		5		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	8		6	100	7	100	4	100								
Retained*	1		3	50	3	43	0	0								
Successfully completed	1		3	50	3	43	0	0								
Still in learning	6		3	50	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

40. ETL has good relationships with employers, keeping in regular formal and informal contact with them. ETL fully understands the business requirements of employers and correctly matches learners and qualifications to meet employers' needs. Learners choose optional NVQ units to reflect their job roles, some working on this with their line manager to ensure correct matching of units to their responsibilities. Programme assessment and training does not negatively affect business requirements. Programmes of work are satisfactorily managed and form part of the progressive development of learners' skills. However, most employers are not involved in the training planning process. Some learners are supported by their employer with extra on-the-job training.

41. Induction for learners is satisfactory and includes an initial assessment of additional support needs. This incorporates a recognised assessment of learners' literacy and numeracy skills and a review of their job role against national occupational standards. Where support needs are identified, ETL has some resources to meet them. It also has agreements in place with other organisations to provide specific support where necessary, for example for learners with dyslexia.

42. Learning sessions are satisfactory. Staff successfully relate the skills they are teaching to the workplace environment. Examples of workplace scenarios are used to demonstrate relevance. Staff use appropriate teaching methods and body language, as well as

appropriate questioning techniques.

43. Resources are generally satisfactory. Sufficient classroom accommodation is available for all learners. All assessors are appropriately qualified. Handouts are clear and concise and use key points to prompt further discussion. They feature relevant workplace scenarios to enhance learning needs effectively.

44. Individual learning plans are satisfactory. They are regularly reviewed and kept up to date. All learners have a copy of their individual learning plan in their portfolio. The plans are broken down into achievable units with medium-term targets for completion. However, targets are not updated during reviews. Some employers have a copy of the individual learning plan. Employers are not effectively involved in the review process.

45. Assessment is managed satisfactorily. Initial assessment provides an accurate basis to plan learners' needs. Assessors visit the workplace every four weeks to observe learners and confirm their competence. There are adequate records of observations and assessment plans. Some learners do not claim appropriate competency for accredited prior achievement or learning. Some learners do not collect evidence actively, only following assessment action plans. Evidence is effectively cross-referenced to units to monitor learners' progress. Internal verification meets the awarding body's standards.

46. Learners' portfolios are satisfactory. They are structured, clear and concise. The wide range of evidence they use is clearly presented but is rarely authenticated by the learner. Good use is made of IT to produce evidence. Evidence in portfolios is sufficient to meet the standards of the awarding body. Observation records are adequately detailed. Clear assessment plans adequately identify evidence gaps. Assessment effectively identifies which evidence can be collected easily to support performance criteria competence.

47. Support for learners is generally satisfactory. All learners have an initial interview and take a literacy and numeracy diagnostic test. Those who have weak literacy and numeracy skills receive adequate support. Assessors are supportive and respond quickly to difficulties when they arise. They make frequent visits to learners in the workplace. Employers fully support learners' programmes, but most employers do not understand the programme requirements. Most employers do not set specific tasks to aid learners' evidence collection.

48. Poor use is made of progress reviews. Reviewers make no reference to previous progress reviews or individual learning plans. Insufficient reinforcement of health and safety and equality of opportunity takes place, and little testing of learners' understanding. Reviewers ask questions but learners' answers are often cursory and have too little depth for their knowledge to be effectively determined. Pastoral issues are rarely discussed. Some review documents include no action plans and some merely repeat assessment action plans. Learners and supervisors have adequate opportunities to add comments and discuss progress but contribute little to the planning of future assessment activity and training activities.

49. Some short-term targets are unchallenging. Most targets are specific but too easily achieved. Most short-term targets are based on expected progress and do not challenge learners. Most learners and employers consider that targets do not aid progress, only endorsing normal progression. Target-setting is poor. Most learners say that targets for the next assessment are easy to achieve. Some learners are not set short-term targets on

review.

Leadership and management

50. Administration programmes have not been led or managed satisfactorily for much of the period since the previous inspection. Retention and achievement rates have been poor for a two-year period. ETL has now put strategies in place to rectify this but it is too early to identify if these are proving to be effective.

51. Both staff members have an appropriate range of assessment qualifications and have a strong industry background. They have taken additional management courses and qualifications enabling them to deliver further training programmes and have satisfactory personal training plans.

52. ETL's approach to equality of opportunity is unsatisfactory. Staff carry out an assessment of equality of opportunity, and policies are checked for legislative compliance and currency. The assessment checks for any issues that have occurred and if the relevant procedure was effective in dealing with the issue. Staff at ETL have received training in equality and diversity since the previous inspection. Most learners can recall the content of their equal opportunities training at induction and can accurately describe the complaints process. However, there is insufficient reinforcement of equality of opportunity during the review process and some employers have a poor understanding of equality and diversity.

53. Internal verification is satisfactory. Staff assess and internally verify each other's work. They recognise the risks that this involves and work hard to ensure they obtain a wide-ranging input from the awarding body. They have regular meetings with awarding bodies and attend many seminars and workshops run by the LSC and Sector Skills Councils. There is a schedule for internal verification. Although units are sampled, this is not a planned process. Verification takes place at an early stage in the development of assessment portfolios, partway through completion and again on programme completion. Completed reports are detailed but contain little guidance on how to improve assessment practice.

54. Staff members have been actively involved in producing the self-assessment report. The process did in some instances involve input from learners and employers but it was not sufficiently critical. The report does not identify many of the strengths and weaknesses in administration.

Customer service

Grade 3

Strengths

- no significant strengths identified

Weaknesses

- poor use of progress reviews

Achievement and standards

55. The development of learners' skills and knowledge is good. This strength is not recognised in the self-assessment report. Learners gain a high level of customer service

skills. Although these skills are gained in a specific context, learners are able to relate them to a wider business environment. They are aware of how their actions affect other parts of the business and their colleagues. The development of learners' background knowledge is good, particularly in relation to applying and understanding the reasons for organisational policies. The confidence levels of learners have significantly increased. They confidently deal with a range of internal and external customers across a range of different situations. Managers and supervisors recognise learners as valuable team members and give many increased responsibilities in their workplaces. A number of learners have progressed from a level 2 qualification in administration or customer service to a level 3 qualification.

56. Rates of retention and achievement are satisfactory, particularly for advanced apprentices. Both rates remained at approximately 60 per cent for learners starting prior to 2001-02. However, redundancies at employers in 2001-02 contributed to a fall in the rates of retention and achievement to 29 per cent. Since 2002-03, approximately 25 per cent of the 38 advanced apprentices starting programmes have completed their framework and 55 per cent remain in learning. Due to the low numbers of learners following apprenticeships, it is not possible to validate trends in achievement or retention. However, the two learners who have started since 2003-04 remain in learning. Learners currently on programme are making satisfactory progress. The standard of work in learners' assessment portfolios is good. This is partially recognised in the self-assessment report.

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

LSC funded work-based learning																
Advanced apprenticeships	2005-06		2004-05		2003-04		2002-03		2001-02							
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Number of starts	1		10		21		16	100	7	100						
Retained*	0		0		3		9	56	2	29						
Successfully completed	0		0		3		9	56	2	29						
Still in learning	1		10		10		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	1		1		1	100	2	100								
Retained*	0		0		0	0	1	50								
Successfully completed	0		0		0	0	1	50								
Still in learning	1		1		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

57. Short-term action-planning is good. This strength is not recognised in the self-assessment report. ETL's staff complete an assessment and review document at the end of each visit. This document gives a detailed record of learners' achievements up to that

visit and targets that have been set for the next visit. Targets are clear and achievable. Usually, between four and eight action points are set, depending upon the work that is involved in each one. Where learners do not meet targets, staff and learners fully discuss the reasons for this before agreeing revised target dates. Individual learning plans are completed in detail. They record all aspects of the training programme, including key skills and technical certificates in addition to the NVQ. Long-term targets are realistic, but some medium-term targets for unit achievement are not sufficiently challenging. Recording of additional requirements in literacy, numeracy and language development is clear. Exemptions from key skills tests are clearly identified.

58. Learners receive a satisfactory induction which includes an initial assessment of their additional support needs. This incorporates a recognised assessment of the learner's literacy and numeracy skills and a review of their job role against national occupational standards. The employer is involved in this analysis. ETL has some resources to meet any identified support needs. It also has agreements in place with other organisations to provide specific support where necessary, for example for learners with dyslexia. Resources are satisfactory, although insufficient use is sometimes made of available audiovisual equipment in teaching sessions. Teaching sessions are also satisfactory. Staff successfully relate the skills they are teaching to the workplace environment. Learners' understanding is regularly checked by the use of open questions to promote debate. Handouts are clear and easy to follow, using key points to prompt further discussion. However, the content of the handouts is not sufficiently linked to national occupational standards.

59. Assessment is satisfactory. Learners are involved in the development of their assessment portfolios, including the referencing and filing of evidence. Learners are clear about the structure of their portfolios and the location of additional evidence such as observation reports. Assessment portfolios contain a wide range of evidence including observation reports, learners' statements, professional discussion and product evidence. Assessments are well planned, and feedback to learners is detailed. However, some assessor observation reports are overly descriptive and not sufficiently judgemental.

60. Staff at ETL have good working relationships with the learners and employers. They provide learners with a range of contact methods including e-mail addresses and mobile telephone numbers. Staff also contact learners between visits to check on their progress. Supervisors receive copies of progress reviews and assessment documents, which include details of future appointments and assessment activities.

61. Poor use is made of progress reviews. Reviewers make no reference to previous progress reviews or individual learning plans. Some reinforcement of health and safety takes place as part of these reviews. Although equality of opportunity is included as a discussion topic within learners' progress reviews, it is not dealt with in detail. Questions are asked by reviewers, but answers are often cursory and do not lead to further debate. Comments from reviewers and employers are often pastoral in their content and do not effectively measure past success or plan future actions and achievements. Employers are present for progress reviews but contribute little to the planning of future assessment and training activity. This is not recognised in the self-assessment report.

62. Employers have insufficient involvement in planning training and assessment. Although employers attend learners' progress reviews they have little input in planning the learners'

progress. There is some consultation about the way in which assessment activity can be used to help meet employers' business needs, particularly in relation to how improvements in customer service can be made. However, this happens at a late stage in the planning of the activity. Many learners complete training provided by the employer, both on and off the job, although this is not included as part of learners' portfolios of evidence and little account is taken of it in planning assessment activity. This is not identified in the self-assessment report.

Leadership and management

63. Staff development is satisfactory. Both assessors have an appropriate range of assessment qualifications and have a strong industry background. Staff have also taken additional management courses and qualifications enabling them to deliver further training programmes. Staff members' personal training plans reflect the commitment that ETL gives to staff training.

64. ETL's approach to equality of opportunity is satisfactory. Staff at ETL have received training in equality and diversity since the previous inspection. Learners recall the content of their equal opportunities training from induction and can accurately describe the complaints process. They have a clear understanding of equal opportunities policies in the workplace and are aware of their rights and responsibilities as employees. Staff provide a very prompt response to issues that arise in the workplace to ensure learners are free from harassment and discrimination. However, there has been insufficient action to redress the gender imbalance in this area of learning.

65. Health and safety issues are closely monitored. Staff carry out a detailed health and safety assessment at employers' premises when a new learner begins, or on an annual basis. Broken down into different categories, the assessment is thorough and wide-ranging. Where necessary, action plans are set and their completion is monitored.

66. Internal verification is satisfactory. Staff assess and internally verify each other's work. They recognise the risks that this system involves and work hard to ensure that they obtain a wide-ranging input from regulatory bodies. They have regular meetings with awarding bodies and attend many seminars and workshops run by the Learning and Skills Council (LSC) and sector skills bodies. Internal verification is planned, although this planning does not ensure that all units are scheduled to be sampled. Verification takes place at an early stage in the development of an assessment portfolio, partway through completion and again on programme completion. Completed reports are detailed but contain little guidance on how to improve assessment practice.

67. The self-assessment report identifies a number of issues identified by inspectors, although it is insufficiently critical. Strengths identified in the self-assessment report are no more than normal practice and some weaknesses are not identified. The report does recognise the importance of a fall in retention and achievement rates but underestimates its effect. The grade given at inspection is lower than that given by self-assessment.

