

REINSPECTION REPORT

Eclipse Training Limited Reinspection

07 December 2006



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
- **learndirect** 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
- adult information, advice and guidance services (**nextstep**).

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

Overall 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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REINSPECTION REPORT

DESCRIPTION OF THE PROVIDER

1. Eclipse Training Limited (Eclipse Training) was established in 1999 and is based in Irchester, Northamptonshire. An office in the managing director's house is used for administration, and training and assessment are usually conducted in the workplace. Eclipse Training offers training in business administration and customer service for apprentices and advanced apprentices. There are 38 learners. Fifteen are working towards customer service qualifications and 23 towards business administration qualifications. All the learners are employed. Eclipse Training's managing director and commercial director are both trainer/assessors, and have recently appointed a further part-time trainer/assessor.
2. Eclipse Training has a contract with the Bedfordshire and Luton Learning and Skills Council. It recruits learners throughout this area.

OVERALL EFFECTIVENESS

Reinspection Grade 2

3. **The overall effectiveness of the provision is good.** At the previous inspection in November 2005, Eclipse Training's leadership and management, including arrangements for equality of opportunity and quality improvement, were inadequate. Provision in business administration and law was also inadequate, although the contributory area of customer service was satisfactory. At the end of the reinspection process, all aspects of the provision were judged to be good, except for the contributory area of equality of opportunity, which was satisfactory.
4. **The inspection team had some confidence in the reliability of the self-assessment process.** The structure of the self-assessment report has been revised since the previous inspection so that it aligns more closely with the Common Inspection Framework. However, it covers business administration and customer service together, and does not describe their separate strengths and weaknesses. Inspectors agreed with some of the strengths and weaknesses identified in the report but they also found some additional ones. Eclipse Training had underestimated the extent of the improvement since the previous inspection.
5. **The provider has demonstrated that it is in a good position to make improvements.** Eclipse Training has successfully dealt with all the key challenges identified by the previous inspection. It has acted on external advice and responded to issues identified during reinspection monitoring visits. Success rates have improved significantly and the provision is now good.

GRADES

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

Grades awarded at previous inspection

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 Apprenticeships for young people	28	4 4	
Customer service Apprenticeships for young people	23	3 3	

Grades awarded at reinspection

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

Business administration and law			2
Contributory areas:	Number of learners	Contributory grade	
Administration Apprenticeships for young people	23	2 2	
Customer service Apprenticeships for young people	15	2 2	

ABOUT THE REINSPECTION

6. The reinspection involved three one-day monitoring visits by one inspector in May, July and October 2006, followed by a three-day visit by two inspectors in December 2006. The one-day visits concentrated on the provider's response to the key challenges identified at the previous inspection, and the three-day visit covered all aspects of the Common Inspection Framework. The reinspection looked at all of Eclipse Training's work-based learning provision.

Number of inspectors	2
Number of inspection days	9
Number of learners interviewed	16
Number of staff interviewed	4
Number of employers interviewed	14
Number of locations/sites/learning centres visited	8

Leadership and management

Strengths

- good actions to improve the provision
- good engagement with employers
- good monitoring of employers' equal opportunities policies and practices

Weaknesses

- ineffective arrangements to assess the quality of teaching and learning
- low proportion of men on apprenticeship programmes

Business administration and law

Strengths

- good framework success rates
- good use of a wide range of assessment methods
- successful and innovative approaches to providing learning support

Weaknesses

- some ineffective recording of short-term targets at monthly progress reviews

DETAILED REINSPECTION FINDINGS

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

Grade 2

Strengths

- good actions to improve the provision
- good engagement with employers
- good monitoring of employers' equal opportunities policies and practices

Weaknesses

- ineffective arrangements to assess the quality of teaching and learning
- low proportion of men on apprenticeship programmes

7. Eclipse Training's leadership and management are good. Managers have taken effective action to deal with the weaknesses identified in the previous inspection report, and the five key challenges have been met successfully. Success rates have improved significantly and are now good. In addition, the proportion of learners who complete in a timely fashion exceeds the national average. The review process, a significant weakness a year ago, has been thoroughly revised and is now satisfactory. The ways in which Eclipse Training works with employers have been strengthened, and this aspect of its work is good. Business planning is now satisfactory. Eclipse Training has a clear strategic direction. The most recent plan contains short-, medium- and long-term targets, focuses on strategic issues, is linked to the annual development plan, and is subject to an annual review. A management weakness concerning assessors' punctuality when visiting learners' workplaces has been resolved. The area of learning is now managed well.

8. Eclipse Training engages employers well in the arrangements for training apprentices. It has very good relationships with employers, and a good understanding of their training needs. Eclipse Training works very closely with employers, involving them fully in choosing a programme that matches learners' job roles and abilities well. Eclipse Training works particularly well with Connexions. It uses its good relationships with employers to good effect by recommending suitable vacancies to learners who are looking for work. Communications are good. Eclipse Training has developed a useful website specifically for its employers.

9. Eclipse Training has an effective management information system which enables it to monitor key performance indicators frequently. The data is accurate and is used well. Before the previous inspection, Eclipse Training had devised a strategy for supporting learners with literacy, numeracy and language needs. This has now been implemented and is working satisfactorily.

10. Resources are good. Eclipse Training has recently employed a third trainer/assessor. Good use is made of laptop computers, audio recorders and digital photography to record learners' work, and staff are exploring the potential of the internet in ways which benefit learners.

Equality of opportunity**Contributory grade 3**

11. Equality of opportunity is satisfactory. Eclipse Training monitors employers' equal opportunities policies and practices well. Staff carry out a very thorough initial assessment, and follow this up with regular checks to ensure that equality of opportunity and health and safety are promoted in the workplace. Some employers have found this process very helpful, and have improved their procedures as a result. They also use the Eclipse Training employers' website to obtain useful and up-to-date information on these matters. Learners and employers have access to useful information on personal safety on their respective websites.

12. The improved review process gives greater emphasis to checking learners' understanding of equality of opportunity. Reviewers now use a range of questions for this. Some learners have a good understanding of equality of opportunity, but others struggle to recall what was covered during their induction.

13. The proportion of male learners on programmes is low at 18 per cent. This weakness is identified in the self-assessment report. Eclipse Training has encouraged employers to give fair consideration to male applicants for jobs in administration and customer service, and has adapted its promotional materials to emphasise the success of current male learners. The proportion of men being recruited has increased from a very low figure earlier in the year. A quarter of Eclipse Training's learners have learning difficulties and/or disabilities, and a similar proportion belong to minority ethnic groups. This exceeds the proportions in the communities in which Eclipse Training operates.

Quality improvement**Contributory grade 2**

14. Eclipse Training has good arrangements for quality improvement, and the provision has improved significantly over the past 12 months. Managers make good use of data to monitor and improve the provision and they have improved the arrangements for gaining feedback from employers and learners. At the time of the previous inspection the response rates to questionnaires sent to these groups were low. Eclipse Training now e-mails questionnaires to all learners and employers, and these can be returned electronically, or by post if anonymity is preferred. The questionnaire features drop-down menus for ease of completion. The response rates from learners and employers have improved to 82 per cent and 67 per cent respectively. Feedback from learners about the length of the programme has led to it being adjusted to better match the ability of the learners. Eclipse Training has responded to the views of some employers by ensuring that they feel more involved in the training process.

15. Internal verification is satisfactory. The process is carefully planned, and assessment arrangements meet the requirements of the awarding bodies. The appeals procedure has been revised to make it easier to use, although no appeals have yet been lodged. The structure of the self-assessment report has been revised, and it now aligns with the Common Inspection Framework more closely. Some parts of the report are too descriptive. Inspectors agreed with some of the strengths and weaknesses identified in the report but they also found some additional ones.

16. The arrangements for assessing the quality of teaching and learning are ineffective. Although formal training events are not a significant aspect of the programme, there has been only one observation of teaching in the past year, and the written feedback provided

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does not constitute a thorough analysis of the strengths and weaknesses of the session. This was commented on by inspectors at the previous inspection. Eclipse Training has recently appointed a new member of staff who will conduct observations. It plans to improve the paperwork used, but there are no firm plans for any external moderation of its assessments.

AREAS OF LEARNING

Business administration and law

Grade 2

Contributory areas:	Number of learners	Contributory grade
Administration Apprenticeships for young people	23	2
Customer service Apprenticeships for young people	15	2

17. There are 38 learners in business administration and law. Five are apprentices and 33 are advanced apprentices. Nineteen of the advanced apprentices are working towards qualifications in administration and 14 towards qualifications in customer service. There are four apprentices in administration and one in customer service. Many business administration learners are working for medium-sized companies in Luton and Bedfordshire. The customer service apprentices work in a wide range of office-based jobs. All learners are employed when they start their programme, as recruitment is conducted co-operatively between Eclipse Training and individual employers. An assessor/trainer visits learners in the workplace every four weeks to carry out assessments, conduct progress reviews, and provide coaching or training. Learners sit external tests for key skills awards and technical certificates.

Strengths

- good framework success rates
- good use of a wide range of assessment methods
- successful and innovative approaches to providing learning support

Weaknesses

- some ineffective recording of short-term targets at monthly progress reviews

Achievement and standards

18. Qualification success rates for apprentices and advanced apprentices are good and have improved significantly since the previous inspection. Overall success rates for the area of learning have improved from 50 per cent in 2004-05 to 75 per cent in 2005-06 and are now significantly above the national average. There are improvements in both administration and customer service. The overall success rate for apprentices was 82 per cent in 2005-06, which is significantly above the national averages for customer service and administration. Between 2004-05 and 2005-06 the success rates for advanced apprentices rose from 43 per cent to 73 per cent. There are good success rates in key skills and technical certificate tests. Success rates in the current year are also good.

19. Customer service and administration apprentices make good progress towards completing their qualification on time. Many of the level 3 learners have acquired good work experience before starting their qualification. Learners' portfolios are organised and presented well, and learners' work is of a satisfactory standard. Learners in both administration and customer service develop a good range of occupational skills and

some are promoted to supervisory roles during or shortly after completing their programmes. Learners become valued members of staff and, in many cases, contribute effectively to organisational improvements. They are well supported by the staff of Eclipse Training who organise an annual award for the most innovative improvement suggested by a learner in their workplace. Employers report that learners' confidence improves significantly as they progress through the course.

20. At the recruitment stage, some customer service learners already possess the advanced skills needed to do a demanding job, and Eclipse Training takes good care to ensure that they are placed on the correct qualification level to match their experience. Most of the new knowledge that learners gain comes through their key skills and technical certificate work, particularly the information gained through Eclipse Training's website.

The quality of provision

21. Eclipse Training makes good use of a wide range of assessment methods. Assessment practice is well organised and observation records contain appropriate judgements. Staff give constructive feedback on assessments and clearly identify what further evidence may be required. Trainers and assessors make good use of digital technology in the assessment process, using digital recorders to collect verbal evidence from learners and employers, and appropriate witness statements. They also use digital and video cameras to capture evidence of learners' competence. Learners make good use of these sources of evidence to produce well-balanced portfolios that are not too heavily reliant on written work. Learners and employers value the relative convenience of providing evidence in a variety of formats.

22. Eclipse Training has developed a successful and innovative approach to providing learning support through the establishment of a well-designed and informative website. Learners and employers are effectively communicated with in separate areas of the site. Technical certificate and key skills support questionnaires and learning materials are readily available through the website. They are well prepared and presented, and thoroughly appreciated by learners. Eclipse Training's assessors use the website well to guide learners to appropriate support materials and useful external websites where they can collect information in support of their learning programmes. Similar support for employers is well signposted, and they can use the website to feed back to Eclipse Training, both formally and informally. In addition to support through the website, assessors provide regular and frequent coaching sessions to individual learners in the workplace. They also produce lesson plans for more formal training sessions which clearly detail the aims, objectives and content of the training.

23. Eclipse Training ensures that employers are closely involved in the learning programmes. The first contact is often made through good use of local networks, and Eclipse Training quickly provides an overview of the available programmes to interested employers. Learners complete an initial assessment and skills review with their employers, and staff from Eclipse Training use this to recommend the most appropriate programmes. Many employers give learners time to complete qualifications at work and are ready to support them to develop their knowledge and understanding of company systems. Employers have a good understanding of learners' progress. They participate in learners' formal quarterly progress reviews, and receive copies of learners' monthly review records and their targets.

24. Initial assessment and additional learning support are organised well. At the start of their course, learners are subject to careful initial assessment to determine any literacy and numeracy needs. They also review their vocational skills, often in conjunction with their employers. Information from the review is used effectively to ensure that the learner has sufficient scope within their job role to complete the qualification. It also helps all parties to tailor the optional units to match the requirements of the job. Tests to identify the learners' support needs are conveniently completed on a laptop computer in their workplace. The results of these are fed back to learners and employers and are used effectively to plan short-term learning targets. Learners in need of additional support are appropriately supported, initially by Eclipse Training but also by specialist agencies if this becomes necessary.

25. The recording of short-term target-setting is not uniformly effective. In many cases, the learners' progress is reliant on what is written on their feedback and progress review, and most learners concentrate only on what is required of them for their next visit. Many of the short-term targets agreed are written down or discussed, but they are not systematically combined in a single record, written or otherwise. Some targets are recorded in a format that can be monitored and achievements can be measured, but others are too general to be an effective indication of what learners must do in order to make progress.

Leadership and management

26. Team working is good. Continuing professional development is good and it is linked to business and personal needs. Effective networking and partnership working with employers has encouraged the sharing of ideas and best practice.

27. Equality of opportunity is managed satisfactorily. Learners feel protected from bullying and harassment, and equality and diversity principles are systematically reinforced at quarterly reviews. Learners have access to a good range of materials on equality and diversity through the company website. The induction booklet contains information about policies and procedures on equality and diversity but is not readily remembered by learners at later stages of their programme.

28. There is a culture of continuous improvement, particularly evident in the development of the company website. The self-assessment report was partially accurate. Inspectors identified additional strengths and one additional weakness to those identified by Eclipse Training.

