

Aviation House  
125 Kingsway  
London  
WC2B 6SE

T 08456 404040  
F 020 7421 6855  
[enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk](mailto:enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk)  
[www.ofsted.gov.uk](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk)



03 December 2009

Ms E Bardell  
Quality Assurance Manager  
Four Counties Training Ltd  
3rd Floor, Shaftesbury House  
49-51 Uxbridge Road  
London  
W5 5SA

Dear Ms Bardell

Ofsted 2009-10 survey inspection programme: the role of employers in work-related education and training

Thank you for your hospitality and cooperation during my visit on 20 November 2009. I am particularly grateful to you and all your staff for the hard work involved in preparing for the visit and for giving up a great deal of time during the visit to meet me. Please pass on my thanks to all those concerned.

The visit provided valuable information that will contribute to our national survey of good practice in the role that employers play in work-related education and training. The published report for this survey will list the names of contributing organisations but individual contributors will not be identified in the main text.

The evidence used to help form the judgements included: interviews with five staff, two employers and three learners; observation of a progress review; and scrutiny of the examples of good practice provided. A range of documents and data was also reviewed.

I agreed to provide a summary of the good practice seen and to identify some areas for development and outline the main findings below.

The main strengths

- Overall success rates for apprenticeships continue to be very high at 90% in 2008/09. There was a dip in performance in 2007/08 when the success rate fell to 70%, although this was still above the national average. Overall success rates for Train to Gain learners, however, fell in 2008/09 having been above the national average for the preceding two years.
- Efforts to recruit more learners from under-represented groups onto engineering programmes have been successful. The number of learners from minority ethnic groups and learners with a disability has continued to

grow as a proportion of all learners. It is particularly encouraging to see that the number of women learners on engineering programmes is nearly four times the national average.

- Four Counties Training has developed excellent partnerships with employers. It communicates very effectively with employers at all levels. There is a clear understanding between the partners about who is responsible for each aspect of the programme and the benefits each derives from the partnership.
- Employer involvement in training continues to be good. Employers take an active role in induction, training and assessing learners, in reviewing their progress and working with Four Counties Training to ensure that learners are successful.
- Learners benefit from being assessed by work-based assessors from their own company. Employers take their responsibility for the assessment of learners seriously and ensure that they have sufficient, well-qualified assessors to do this.
- Training and assessment are integrated very well into existing competence assessment of staff. Four Counties Training and employers have cross-referenced assessment-activities and competency standards to make very good use of existing assessment practice. This reduces any overlap and simplifies the assessment process for learners and assessors.

The main areas for further development:

- Although the review of learners' progress is regular and thorough, not all employers make a suitable contribution to setting targets and monitoring progress. In the example observed, the review of progress and setting of targets had been completed with the learner before the employers joined the meeting.

I hope these observations are useful as you continue to develop the provision. If there are any points you wish to discuss, please contact me. We gather information on the impact of our visits. To this end, you may be contacted by telephone or sent a questionnaire to complete six to 12 months after the visit. I hope you will contribute to this evaluation.

As I explained in my previous letter, a copy of this letter will be published on the Ofsted website and will be available to the team for your next inspection.

Yours sincerely

Phil Romain  
Her Majesty's Inspector