

ITS Training Ltd.

Independent learning provider

Inspection dates		16-19 October 2012
Overall effectiveness	This inspection:	Good-2
	Previous inspection:	Good-2
Outcomes for learners		Good-2
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment		Good-2
Effectiveness of leadership and management		Good-2

Summary of key findings for learners

This provider is good because:

- The success of learners on apprenticeships is good and that of learners at level 2 in international trade and logistics is outstanding. Most learners complete their qualification within the expected time.
- Teaching, learning and assessment are good and make very effective use of a wide range of electronic resources, which encourage independent learning.
- Support for learners is very good. Staff are responsive to learners' needs and work hard to help them progress and to keep them on programme.
- Leaders and managers have high expectations of learners and ensure that these are shared throughout the organisation.
- ITS's strong national and international partnerships ensure the currency and relevance of its specialist learning programmes.

This is not yet an outstanding provider because:

- Staff do not use individual learning plans and reviews effectively to set short-term targets to help learners progress and improve.
- On-line learning materials need further development to engage fully all learners.
- Diagnostic assessment materials require further development to better capture learners' functional skills needs.
- Managers and staff do not apply rigorous self-assessment and improvement activities across all of the provision.

Full report

What does the provider need to do to improve further?

- Review systems for monitoring learners' progress and performance to ensure that procedures for setting short-term targets are clear and consistent and that staff and learners are aware of learners' progress towards framework completion.
- Further, develop on-line resources to engage fully with all learners.
- Explore the best exercise and fitness practice at a range of providers and settings to ensure that learners on sport, recreational and leisure programmes have the highest standard of learning.
- Improve the diagnosis of functional skills to make sure it accurately assesses each learner's current level and development needs.
- Ensure that managers and staff apply rigorous self-assessment and improvement activities consistently across all provision, particularly for sport, recreational and leisure provision.

Inspection judgements

Outcomes for learners	Good
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- Virtually all apprentices on the relatively new international trade and logistics operations programme succeed in gaining their qualifications. This outstanding performance is matched by nearly all learners completing before their planned end date. Outcomes for other programmes in the logistic area are mostly good.
- Apprentices on business administration programmes have a good record of achieving their qualification, with intermediate apprentices being particularly successful. A high proportion of management apprentices have also achieved their qualification, with this good performance being maintained over a number of years. In the past learners on both these programmes have not completed their programme within their planned timescales, but managers and staff have resolved this in the most recent year.
- Learners across nearly all programmes achieve to the same standard, with no significant difference between the performance of differing groups of learners. The one exception is in the Access to Apprenticeship programmes, where the males, who are the majority of learners, perform less well than the small number of females. Managers have identified this and they are attempting to close the gap.
- Apprentices successfully develop their knowledge and understanding and reinforce their vocational skills through the use of well-constructed electronic materials and good guidance and feedback from trainers and assessors. For example, logistics apprentices show good knowledge and application of spreadsheets when using the employers' international logistics systems and procedures, and make good progress with their work.
- The majority of learners in the Access to Apprenticeship programmes develop good employability skills improving their confidence, communication skills and their ability to work in groups. However, the attendance and punctuality of a minority of learners in the London based pre-apprenticeship sport and recreation programme are poor.
- Learners in the shipping and export industries undertake a useful and vocationally relevant additional qualification, Commercial Operations and Awareness of Shipping and Trade (COAST). This qualification successfully extends their understanding of their industry and their role in it. It is accredited by the Institute of Export and gives credit towards higher professional qualifications.

- Staff encourage learners to continue their learning and a reasonable proportion progress from level 1 to level 2 or 3 in logistics and in business administration. A number also progress and work towards management qualifications. A few learners progress particularly well and one who joined a level 1 programme is now studying for a foundation degree. Almost all learners consider that their programme is preparing them well for the next steps in their career.
- Access to Apprenticeship programmes have not led to enough learners progressing to an apprenticeship in a timely fashion. In the ICT, sports, recreational, and leisure subject areas, learners have not yet been on programme long enough to complete their qualification. Progress on the information and communication technology (ICT) programmes is good, but the poor punctuality and attendance of learners' sports programmes impacts on their overall progress.

The quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Good

- Teaching, learning and assessment for the great majority of learners are good. Trainers mostly provide learners with effective challenge and manage individual learner's progress well. This good management of learning contributes to the above average and sometimes outstanding success of apprentices.
- Support for learners on apprenticeship and Access to Apprenticeship programmes is very good. Learners have good access to their trainers and assessors through telephone, email and the company's conferencing facilities. All trainers undertake the in-house initial programme for teacher training which focuses on supporting individual learner's needs. Learners are very positive about the support staff give them and acknowledge how it contributes to their achievement and development.
- Staff provide very good support to learners with particular learning and social needs. A few learners have individual support plans, which help them to remain on programme and continue to work towards their qualification. These plans deal effectively with learners specific needs and, when appropriate, involve parents and carers in their development.
- Managers and staff use very effectively a wide range of expertise and resources within the local community to support learners and they have drawn key partners together into an 'Ambitions' group. This group provides interventions for learners in crisis and opportunities for partners to work together to develop projects to improve the employability of local young people.
- Managers and staff provide a wide range of good quality learning materials through the ITS campus virtual learning environment. Learners can work at their own level and speed and most develop effective independent learning skills. However, these resources do not always successfully engage all learners.
- Apprentices are employed in a range of nationally based shipping and exporting companies. The training staff provide, which includes an internally developed and nationally recognised additional qualification, COAST, enables learners quickly to become effective employees and team members in a complex and exacting work environment.
- Learners' induction is good. Detailed electronic assessment and guidance materials support induction. Staff and learners work through these materials on the telephone taking account of learners' skills, their job role and their career ambitions. Learners complete initial screening and diagnostic tests, which most staff use well to design individual learning programmes.
- Staff use a series of instruments to monitor learners' progress, including individual learning plans and detailed timetables for each unit, which effectively encourage and support learners' timely achievement. However, learners' reviews, which staff hold regularly, are very brief and do not include sufficient clear short-term targets to help learners understand how to progress.

- The poor attendance and punctuality of learners on the Access to Apprenticeship programme in sport leisure and recreation managers and staff have not monitored well and they have not planned sufficient interventions for improvement.
- Managers and staff provide good support to develop learners' English and mathematics skills including a range of electronic materials and detailed telephone and written feedback. They monitor learners' progress and performance carefully. However, managers recognise that initial assessments need further development to meet the requirements of functional skills.
- ITS is a welcoming and inclusive provider; the promotion of equality and diversity at induction is strong and trainers reinforce key aspects effectively in training sessions. However, staff do not use reviews effectively to challenge and develop learners' understanding of equality issues.

Warehousing and distribution

Apprenticeships

Good

- Teaching learning and assessment on the international trade and logistics operations programme are good and contribute to the outstanding success rates achieved by intermediate apprentices over recent years. Advanced apprentices currently on the logistics operations programme are on target to complete successfully their qualification by their planned end date.
- Learners develop good vocational skills in local shipping offices that support international freight transportation operations across Europe. They quickly become competent at customs and shipping documentation and procedures and successfully meet the high expectation of employers in the workplace. They rapidly become effective members of specialist teams.
- Teaching and learning, particularly the development of independent learning skills are good. Learners, through the ITS campus virtual learning environment, benefit from having the flexibility to study when it suits their individual needs and work roles, which is particularly effective for distance learners. The majority of the current learners make very good progress.
- Most learners successfully complete the externally accredited COAST programme, which usefully supplements their theoretical understanding of their work. Group telephone conferencing provides effective learning for this programme, which trainers support by offering individual sessions when learners require further help. Learners appreciate this method of learning. However, the content of a minority of learning materials is not appropriate for all learners.
- Both assessors and employers give apprentices good support. Assessors have a good range of skills, knowledge and vocational experience. Assessors plan and coordinate well on-the-job assessment and learners use a range of evidence including direct observation, witness testimony and personal statements. Assessors provide fair, timely, accurate and detailed feedback to learners.
- Managers and staff effectively use information and communication technology to provide and monitor all learners' activities. Management information systems store learners' portfolios electronically, together with assessment information and learners' responses to the many activities that check their understanding. Assessors use the information to provide additional guidance and support when necessary to improve learners' performance. However, although this wide range of data is available, managers and staff do not clearly track or monitor learners' progress towards the completion of their framework.
- Staff and learners complete reviews regularly and systematically and they cover all aspects of the learning programme, but reviews do not check and develop learners' understanding effectively. Staff and learners set targets, but they are not sufficiently clear or precise.

- Induction is good, effectively identifying learners starting points and ensuring programmes meet individual needs. For example, learners who score highly on their initial assessment have the opportunity to study a higher level of functional skills qualification than they require for their framework.
- Promotion of health and safety, equality and diversity and safeguarding during induction is good. Trainers ensure that learners make effective use of learning materials and task sheets to check and develop their understanding. However, the reinforcement and development of these topics within the learners' programme and through reviews is superficial and does not effectively challenge or develop their understanding.

Sport, leisure and recreation

Apprenticeships

Requires improvement

- Teaching, learning and assessment activities are underdeveloped and require improvement. These methods do not resolve differences in ability within the group, mainly employ basic learning resources and do not use sufficient activities to stretch and challenge learners who are more able.
- Trainers ensure that learners are well cared for and supported, and they have an excellent understanding of learners' individual needs. Learners are able to contact trainers and managers by phone to discuss any issues and staff give specific support to help learners with debt, drug, alcohol, and other social issues.
- Most learners feel they make good progress and they appreciate the supportive and positive environment that trainers have established. Trainers make good use of their expertise providing excellent demonstrations and insightful analogies to bring theory into practice. However, learners are too often passive in lessons and trainers do not effectively develop learners' practical skills in relation to their stage in the Access to Apprenticeship programme.
- Trainers make sure the use of a high quality on-site fitness gym is safe. Classroom resources are adequate and provide sufficient access to ICT and on-line learning resources including course materials, assessments, handouts and a specialist area with videos of advanced exercise programmes and adaptations. Trainers make all learners aware of and encourage them to use the resources.
- Learners consider their course and relationships with their trainers have improved their confidence and employability skills. Staff give learners good support to find work placements. Bursary incentives very effectively support personal training learners at level 3 to search for self-employment opportunities. For example, one group of learners has set up their own business, teaching their fitness programmes in schools and actively promoting educational opportunities and personal effectiveness to young people in the local community. However, learners' attendance and punctuality are poor.
- Learners' initial assessment effectively identifies their mathematics and English needs and helps set appropriate overall learning goals in their individual learning plans. However, trainers do not use these goals to set targets for progress reviews and they do not always use individual targets to inform planning and to ensure that lessons effectively meet each learner's needs.
- In lessons, trainers use assessment frequently to check learning. However, they rely too much on open questions and make little use of peer or self-assessment. Although learners say they receive timely, comprehensive and supportive feedback on their work, the quality of written feedback is inconsistent. It does not always identify how well learners have achieved and check and correct errors in grammar, punctuation and spelling, or give specific guidance for

improvement. The quality of learners' summative assessment and internal verification processes meet the awarding body's standards.

- Trainers appropriately promote equality and diversity and foster good working and social relationships. Learners are happy to discuss issues openly. Trainers are skilled in developing learners' understanding and their responses to their different needs of their clients. For example, one session involved learners in adapting fitness exercises and programmes for a range of abilities and cultural backgrounds.

Business management and administration

Apprenticeships

Good

- Teaching, learning and assessment are good. This is a key factor in providing learners with high success rates. The planning of assessment is very effective. Learners make good progress towards achieving their qualifications. Trainers provide very effective coaching for the large majority of apprentices using well-prepared resources that they access on-line. However, a minority do not improve their skills as efficiently using on-line methods.
- Trainers and assessors have relevant and up-to-date specialist expertise and provide highly effective learning sessions and coaching in groups, at assessment visits and over the telephone. For example, in one session trainers gave learners good guidance on e-safety and how they could recognise the dangers of giving personal information using the internet.
- Learners clearly understand how to improve their skills following thorough, timely and accurate feedback after assessment activities. On-line lectures and resources provide very detailed information for learners to support their learning including published management theories.
- Assessment is thorough and responsive to learners and employers' needs. Assessors are skilful in identifying learners' support needs and provide very effective coaching and guidance. Assessors use professional discussion and questioning very effectively to develop and check learners' knowledge and understanding.
- Trainers give apprentices clear targets for the completion of remote learning and assessment activities. Trainers support learners through telephone, email and intranet well, effectively developing their skills.
- Employers benefit from learners attending programmes and support their employees to achieve their qualification. They are keen to find out how their learners are progressing and they provide useful feedback to learners. Learners use the knowledge and understanding they gain throughout the qualification well to improve their standards of work.
- Use of individual learning plans and progress reviews to record planned learning and assessment to ensure learners are on target for timely completion of their qualifications is not effective. The diagnosis of learners' needs and the resources for the development of teaching English and mathematics including spelling, punctuation, grammar and numerical formulae are very effective. However, diagnostic assessments for functional skills are not fully developed.
- Learners have a good basic understanding of the impact of equality and diversity on their work and personal life. It is an integral part of induction. On the Access to Apprenticeship, course staff integrate well equality and diversity including cyber-bullying and workplace employment rights and responsibilities into lessons. An administrator asks apprentices questions on equality and diversity at progress reviews, but these questions do not always stretch and challenge learners.

The effectiveness of leadership and management

Good

- On the main programmes, managers and staff work enthusiastically and effectively to raise the standards of their learners' work and promote a culture of high achievement. Expectations are high, particularly for the majority of the apprentices working in international shipping where employment practices have to be exact. Managers have widened the company's offer to learners outside its core business, particularly in sports and leisure, but this provision is not of the same standard.
- Planning for the core business is very sound with strategies ensuring the business survives, learning improves and outcomes remain at high levels for nearly all programmes. Managers communicate vision, mission and strategies well to staff, with better use of data improving performance. Managers ensure that the majority of learners gain the knowledge they need to succeed through significant investment in, and use, of comprehensive online learning materials.
- Management of staff performance is mostly good. ITS is a small provider with only around six training staff, but managers still use a helpful and effective formal system of appraisal which includes a constructive scheme of observing teaching and learning, linked with good staff development. The performance of learners is key to staff management and development.
- The approach to self-assessment is sound, leading to a good record of regular improvements. Involvement of learners in the process is satisfactory; managers have attempted several innovative ways to increase this involvement, but with limited success. Good use of data, rigorous quality assurance and an increasing level of thoughtful reflection ensure that nearly all learning and systems are at a high standard.
- The small mainly London-based and recently established sports provision is not subject to the same rigorous self-assessment, quality assurance and improvement planning as the main programmes operating out of the Felixstowe office. Weaknesses in the provision, such as attendance and punctuality and the quality of a minority of lessons managers have not identified and rectified promptly.
- Links with variety of national bodies, from professional organisations to awarding bodies, are particularly strong. Professional challenge and supportive dialogue lead to the development of new programmes that are appropriate to employers across the country. Continuing links with, amongst others, overseas governments and universities, ensure that staff have a high standard of professional knowledge and expertise, although managers do not have plans for when the most experienced staff move on.
- Managers and staff develop provision particularly well for learners. Most employers welcome online provision and for the majority of learners it is an effective way of learning. Another substantial enhancement is that all learners in shipping undertake an additional very useful and relevant course that staff developed initially as a significant commercial offering, but which is now an accredited national award.
- Very regular detailed analysis of the performance of various groups of learners and procedures, such as recruitment, with clear action planning, ensures differences in performance are not significant. Coverage of equality and diversity in the online training materials is strong, particularly in the induction element. Face-to-face work with sports learners and in the Access to Apprenticeship programmes add to learners' understanding, but attempts to further reinforce equality principles in reviews lack challenge.
- ITS meets the statutory requirements for safeguarding its learners. Procedures are comprehensive, staff understand their role well and the few cases of concern reporting is particularly effective with good follow-up action. A thorough risk-based approach to health and safety ensures that learners operate in a safe environment.

Record of Main Findings (RMF)

ITS Training Ltd									
Inspection grades are based on a provider's performance: 1: Outstanding 2: Good 3: Requires improvement 4: Inadequate	Overall	14-16 Learning programmes	16-18 Learning programmes	19+ Learning programmes	Apprenticeships	Other work- based learning	Employability	Foundation Learning	Community learning
Outcomes for learners	2				2				
The quality of teaching, learning and assessment	2				2				
The effectiveness of leadership and management	2				2				

Subject areas graded for the quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Grade
Warehousing and distribution	2
Sport, leisure and recreation	3
Business management	2
Adminstration	2

Provider details

Provider name	ITS Training Ltd.
Type of provider	Independent learning provider
Age range of learners	16+
Approximate number of all learners over the previous full contract year	Full-time: 364
	Part-time: 8
Principal/CEO	Steven Edson
Date of previous inspection	April 2008
Website address	www.itstraining.co.uk

Provider information at the time of the inspection								
Main course or learning programme level	Level 1 or below		Level 2		Level 3		Level 4 and above	
	16-18	19+	16-18	19+	16-18	19+	16-18	19+
Total number of learners (excluding apprenticeships)								
Full-time	N/A	N/A	N/A	0	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Part-time	N/A	N/A	N/A	4	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Number of apprentices by Apprenticeship level and age	Intermediate		Advanced		Higher			
	16-18	19+	16-18	19+	16-18	19+		
	23	61	9	75	0	0		
Number of learners aged 14-16	N/A							
Number of community learners	N/A							
Number of employability learners	4							
Funding received from	Skills Funding Agency (SFA)							
At the time of inspection the provider contracts with the following main subcontractors:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Cameo Network Services Limited 							

Additional socio-economic information

The provider is situated in the predominantly rural county of Suffolk, which has a population of approximately 720,000. Suffolk is generally affluent, with a few areas of deprivation in Ipswich and in the north of the county. The number of pupils attaining five GCSEs at A*-C including English and mathematics is at the national average. The unemployment rate of 6.8% is 1.5% below the national average. The proportion of the working population with no qualifications at 6.9% is just over 1% below the national average. The main employment in Felixstowe is shipping and international trade related to the container port. The provider also recruits learners nationwide principally in import and export businesses.

Information about this inspection

Lead inspector

Sandra Summers HMI

Two of Her Majesty's Inspectors (HMI) and three additional inspectors, assisted by the managing director as nominee, carried out the inspection with short notice. Inspectors took account of the provider's most recent self-assessment report and development plans, and the previous inspection report. Inspectors also used data on learners' achievements over the last three years to help them make judgements. Inspectors used group and individual interviews, telephone calls and online questionnaires to gather the views of learners and employers; these views are reflected throughout the report. They observed learning sessions, assessments and progress reviews. The inspection took into account all of the provision at the provider. Inspectors looked at the quality of teaching, learning and assessment across all of the provision and graded the sector subject areas listed in the report above.

What inspection judgements mean

Grade	Judgement
Grade 1	Outstanding
Grade 2	Good
Grade 3	Requires improvement
Grade 4	Inadequate

Detailed grade characteristics can be viewed in the *Handbook for the inspection of further education and skills 2012*, Part 2:

<http://www.ofsted.gov.uk/resources/handbook-for-inspection-of-further-education-and-skills-september-2012>

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