



Rhagoriaeth i bawb – Excellence for all

Arolygiaeth Ei Mawrhydi dros Addysg
a Hyfforddiant yng Nghymru

Her Majesty's Inspectorate
for Education and Training in Wales

A report on

**ITEC Training Solutions Ltd
ITEC House
Penarth Road
Cardiff
CF11 8TT**

Date of inspection: March 2011

by

**Estyn, Her Majesty's Inspectorate for Education
and Training in Wales**



During each inspection, inspectors aim to answer three key questions:

Key Question 1: How good are the outcomes?

Key Question 2: How good is provision?

Key Question 3: How good are leadership and management?

Inspectors also provide an overall judgement on the provider's current performance and on its prospects for improvement.

In these evaluations, inspectors use a four-point scale:

Judgement	What the judgement means
Excellent	Many strengths, including significant examples of sector-leading practice
Good	Many strengths and no important areas requiring significant improvement
Adequate	Strengths outweigh areas for improvement
Unsatisfactory	Important areas for improvement outweigh strengths

The report was produced in accordance with section 77 of the Learning and Skills Act 2000.

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Context

ITEC Training Solutions Ltd is a privately owned training provider, with its Head Office based in Cardiff. It was initially established in 1982 as Cardiff ITEC and commenced the delivery of training in 1983 as a provider of Information Technology Training. The company currently provides work-based learning opportunities across Wales, with the majority of learners situated in Cardiff and South East Wales.

The company holds a contract with the Welsh Assembly Government to deliver Work Based Learning programmes throughout Wales. These include Apprenticeships, Skill build, Routes into Work (RIW). Pathways include learning in Construction, Engineering and Manufacturing, Business Administration, Health, Public Services and Care, Information and Communication Technology and Retailing and Customer Service. A flexible programme of Skillbuild for both adults and young people is primarily aimed at progressing learners into a job or further learning opportunities. At the time of the inspection there were 1534 learners in training. Of these 73% were undertaking Foundation Modern Apprenticeship (FMA) or Modern Apprenticeship (MA) programmes, 25% were on the Skillbuild programme and the remainder on other funded programmes, for example Department of Work and Pensions (DWP).

Since the last Estyn inspection in January 2005 there has been a restructure of the senior management team and other staff roles. As a result the company has a clearer strategic direction, managers and staff work better together as a team, staff morale has improved and the performance of learners has steadily improved,

Summary

The provider's current performance	Good
The provider's prospects for improvement	Good

Current performance

Overall the rates at which learners attain their National Vocational Qualifications (NVQ) and their individual learning plans (Skillbuild) are good. There has been a continuous upward trend in performance over the last three years with latest figures significantly above National Comparators. Learners perform equally well on all training programmes.

All learners are highly motivated, ambitious and enjoy their training. The results of the learner questionnaire show high satisfaction rates.

The company's directors and senior management provide good leadership and set a clear direction and vision for the company. They have maintained high standards and improved learner success rates year-on-year at a time of rapid expansion, contract changes and taking over contracts from failing providers.

Prospects for improvement

The prospects for improvement are good because of:

- there is a continuous upward trend in performance;
- the good strategic direction provided by the board;
- effective communication across the provider;
- the provider has made good progress in implementing the recommendations from the last inspection;
- the quality of teaching and assessment is good; and
- the collaboration work with a wide range of partners to extend the range of good quality training opportunities for learners.

Recommendations

- R1 Develop a strategy to promote and evaluate the impact of wellbeing initiatives.
- R2 Improve support for learners with English language development needs.
- R3 Improve the provision for developing learners' bilingual skills and knowledge of Welsh culture.
- R4 Involve all employers fully in learners' progress reviews.
- R5 Ensure staff are well informed about the progress of different groups of learners.

What happens next?

Estyn requires the recommendations from the inspection to be addressed in the provider's improvement plan to DCELLS as part of the regular improvement planning cycle

Main findings

Key Question 1: How good are outcomes?

Good

Standards: Good

Overall, the rate at which learners gain their qualifications is good. Over the last three years, the attainment rate on all programmes has improved significantly. The latest DCELLS Learner Outcomes Report (LOR) shows success rates and positive progressions to be significantly above National Comparators (NC) in all but positive progressions in Adult Skill Build.

The provider's unverified data for 2009-2010 shows that learners' success rates have improved across all programmes and learning areas. Learners perform equally well on both F and MA programmes. Of the learners following the Skillbuild programme, success rates are 82% compared to the NC of 72%. Outcomes for NEET learners on a pilot Community Engagement Programme are particularly good with 14 of the 15 learners who started the programme going into further training or employment. Almost all learners complete their qualifications within the timescales stipulated in their Individual Learning Plans (ILP).

Almost all learners make good progress in their training programmes. In a very few cases, the pace of progress for more able learners is too slow. All learners develop good learning and practical skills and a broad knowledge base to enhance their training and employment opportunities. All learners interviewed understand their learning programmes and are highly motivated, ambitious and confident in their work.

Overall, the standard of learners' work in NVQ portfolios is good. Most learners' portfolios show evidence of good independent research. Learners' written and practical work is mostly good.

Learners generally make good progress in developing their essential skills. Almost all learners complete their key skills early on in their training. A few learners complete their key skills at a higher level than required by their frameworks.

Learners are exposed to Welsh language and culture through the use of classroom displays and models. These include days of the week, months of the year, the Welsh National Anthem and a project carried out by Skillbuild learners to celebrate St David's day. A small number of learners use incidental Welsh with residents in the care homes in which they work.

In all reviews with learners there is discussion on their level of use of bilingual skills and knowledge of the Welsh culture.

Wellbeing: Good

Nearly all learners have a good understanding of health and safety in the workplace. Responses in the learners' questionnaires indicate that they feel safe in the workplace and in the provider's centres. Nearly all know how to recognise bullying

and harassment and are clear what they can do about it if it were to happen to them. During reviews, many learners discuss fitness regimes and efforts they are making to develop healthy lifestyles. Learners in care homes and on domiciliary care programmes prepare meals for their service users, where they demonstrate an awareness of healthy eating options. Most learners in school placements are involved in their schools' healthy eating activities. Nearly all Skillbuild learners attain a Healthy Lifestyles module.

Overall, learners enjoy their learning and are well motivated to succeed. Many mature learners become more confident in their ability to learn as a result of the support they receive. A few develop their self esteem and learn skills that help them to attend job interviews. Learners progress well into higher levels of opportunity or work as a result of their learning. A few have taken on more challenging roles in their workplace and one has used his training to secure a management position. They demonstrate high levels of respect towards and support for their colleagues. Those working in care settings show sensitivity and respect for clients. Nearly all learners take an active part in planning their learning and assessment. Nearly all work well towards agreed objectives. Attendance rates are good.

Many learners take up opportunities to participate in charity fund raising or community events such as painting a communal space in a primary school. The provider takes good account of the views of learners through a range of methods, including comprehensive surveys. Learner representatives attend fora on a weekly and monthly basis and provide feedback to the provider. Their views influence improvement planning.

Key Question 2: How good is provision?	Good
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Learning experiences: Good

The provider meets the needs of learners, employers and the community well. It offers a wide range of programmes, and learners have the opportunity to undertake additional qualifications to enhance their learning, for example, safeguarding, manual handling, first aid and fire awareness training.

The provider has developed effective working relationships with a wide range of employers to provide learners with appropriate training opportunities and skills. Skillbuild learners are given a variety of helpful work placement tasters. They also participate in realistic work environments established by the provider, "The Office" for business administration and the "Skillz Café" for retail and hospitality. As a result, these learners develop useful employment skills for their chosen vocational route.

All learners undertake an initial assessment as part of their induction. The provider uses the information from diagnostic testing well to establish the skill level of learners. Where learners are identified with basic skills needs, appropriate support is in place. Over the past 12 months, 76% of learners on the Skillbuild programme who need basic skills support took it up.

The standard of literacy skills in a range of NVQ portfolios is good. Assessors correct and mark learners work with constructive comments and feedback.

The provider has a Welsh Language strategy and is starting to offer and develop Welsh medium learning through partnership and collaboration arrangements. Managers and staff are committed to promoting the language and culture of Wales. A few members of staff are Welsh speakers. Assessors integrate aspects of Welsh culture, such as poetry and historical landmarks into off-job training sessions. At present the provider does not have the capacity to fully support learners who have some bilingual competence. However, overall the provider does not do enough to promote the language and culture of Wales.

The provider promotes Education for Sustainable Development and Global Citizenship (ESDGC) particularly well to learners and staff. The provider has a whole organisation approach to ESDGC and fosters a culture of environmental improvement. The provider has invested in a number of useful initiatives throughout the organisation such as a digital pen which has reduced paper usage by 33%, recycling, economy driving and many other energy saving projects. ESDGC initiatives are discussed with learners during reviews. The provider has a sustainable development policy and has achieved the Green Dragon Award.

Learners are encouraged to take part in a number of charity events, such as the shoe box appeal, World Earth day and Children in Need. Skillbuild learners have undertaken a number of projects, such as, Impact Drama (a drama group with a focus on bullying), Inroads Drugs project, Amnesty International, and a carnival float at the Bute town carnival.

Teaching: Good

Overall, teaching and assessment are good. Inspectors judged almost three-quarters of sessions observed to be good or better.

Relationships between learners, assessors and employers are very good and they develop high levels of mutual respect and trust.

Training staff plan training and assessment activities very well. For example one assessor uses a helpful visual planning calendar that helps learners focus on achievement and future objectives. Training staff have very good subject knowledge and use a good range of teaching styles to fully engage learners in developing their vocational and key skills through workplace experiences. However, a few learners did not start on their qualification early enough in their training programme.

Most session and lesson plans are detailed and comprehensive. Training staff are sensitive to the needs of learners who lack confidence at the start of their training. They carefully tailor training programmes to meet individual needs and constantly encourage and support learners as they tackle more complex activities. Most training staff use questioning effectively to check learners' knowledge and understanding.

Assessment is well planned and thorough. Learners are clear about assessment criteria and often email their written work to assessors for comment before they visit. Assessors give learners constructive oral and written feedback on their work.

Training staff visit employed learners and those in work placements at least once every four weeks to undertake progress reviews. They discuss learners' achievements, review their overall progress and set clear targets for the next period. However, in many cases, employers are not involved enough in this process.

Tutors use a digital 'pen' that captures and sends information on completed paperwork to the central system for review and storage. This not only significantly reduces paper usage, but enables learners to have an immediate copy of their next targets for easy reference. Managers also have immediate access to this important data.

Care, support and guidance: Good

The provider promotes wellbeing through a good range of methods, including information sessions and discussions with learners. Learners in one large company benefit from the provision of free fruit and healthy eating options available in the canteen. Assessors routinely review individuals' health and wellbeing during monthly review discussions. This helps to raise learners' awareness of health and wellbeing. The provider systematically monitors health and safety of work placements. There is a useful health and safety database to analyse health and safety incidents.

Most Skillbuild learners are aware of the importance of healthy eating and personal hygiene and have developed their social and life skills on the programme. The provider measures learners' development of soft skills. Not all tutors are aware of the outcomes of this assessment or clear about how to use it in assessment planning. Learners who have additional learning needs receive good, appropriate support that helps them succeed. There is a good range of enrichment activities available to learners.

Nearly all learners are clear what their programme will involve. Assessors give good advice to learners before they start on their programmes and give them clear documentation. Assessors give learners good advice about jobs and career development. Staff identify learners' additional learning needs effectively during initial assessment. Learners with basic skills needs receive good help to improve these skills. Staff support learners from vulnerable and minority groups well. However there is no effective provision to support the few learners who have English language development needs.

Most Skillbuild learners are aware of the specialist support provided by the provider's pastoral officer and specialist agencies available. The provider also has a broad range of partnerships with support agencies, which staff use well to help learners who have barriers to learning such as emotional problems or home difficulties. This support helps learners to stay on the programme. The provider has an appropriate policy and procedures for safeguarding. Staff know what to do if they are concerned about a learner's safety. The provider records the progress of safeguarding incidents clearly.

Learning environment: Good

The provider has comprehensive policies and procedures in place that promote equality and diversity. All managers and staff are committed to and encourage an ethos of inclusivity and respect. In general, learners show respect for each other in training sessions and at work. Almost all learners have a good understanding of equality and diversity and know who to contact if they have problems. Assessors reinforce equality and diversity during review visits.

The provider monitors equality and diversity well. However, managers do not always inform key staff of the success of relevant policies. For example, there are no clear strategies in place to ensure that all staff know how well learners from vulnerable backgrounds are progressing in comparison to a norm, or in comparison to those of other providers.

Overall, the provider has enough good quality resources to meet learners' needs. Accommodation at the provider's training centres is of a good standard, well maintained and fit for purpose. Staff use these areas effectively to display and promote enrichment activities, such as healthy eating. Work placement accommodation varies from adequate to a good standard, and provides learners with good opportunities to develop their practical skills.

Key Question 3: How good are leadership and management?	Good
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Leadership: Good

ITEC has a clear management structure. The four directors provide good leadership and set a clear direction and vision for the company. They have maintained high standards and improved learner success rates year-on-year at a time of rapid expansion, contract changes and taking over contracts from failing providers. The directors set clear priorities for the organisation. These include the wellbeing and personal development of their staff, the continuous improvement of training and the provision of accurate data on learner performance. ITEC priorities and core values are reviewed regularly and shared with all staff and partners through clear strategic and operational plans. Directors devolve departmental budgets appropriately to senior managers who take ownership and responsibility for income and expenditure in their areas of work.

The provider has responded well to local and national priorities for education and training. They contribute effectively to the 14-19 partnerships in Cardiff and Newport and contribute well to improving the provision for NEETS, essential skills and wellbeing.

The four directors work well with their senior managers to set and monitor appropriate and challenging targets for learner outcomes. These targets are shared with all staff and responsibility for meeting, and often exceeding these targets, is shared by all staff and managers. Lines of accountability are clear and all staff and managers share a common responsibility for learners' performance and wellbeing. Directors and senior managers share a common understanding of the importance of accurate and timely data on learners' performance. They collect and analyse data

regularly and know how well they are performing in comparison to other training providers in Wales. Staff morale is high and communication across the organisation is good. There are regular meetings at all levels. Management briefings and newsletters provide staff and partners with additional information on company developments and are an effective means of sharing and celebrating learners' successes.

ITEC has a well-developed appraisal system to monitor and improve the performance of staff and managers. The annual performance appraisals assess individual performance accurately, set clear objectives for the next year and identify training and development needs well.

Improving quality: Good

Processes for self assessment are good. Staff at all levels are fully involved in the process and in the completion of the self-assessment report (SAR). They are able to review the progress of the SAR development and supporting information via the company-wide intranet facilities. The provider has mature processes in place to listen to learners through focus groups, questionnaires and less formally through the good relationships between learners, assessors and tutors. The provider uses a good and flexible range of strategies to canvas the opinions of the employers they work with and other stakeholders. These activities are well supported and resourced by the provider.

The quality development plan (QDP) is a very effective tool for continuous improvement. Improvement progress targeted in the QDP is discussed and monitored at every monthly operational management meeting. Statistical information relating to all the provider's performance indicators are routinely monitored at all levels of the provider operations. Action planning is a key feature of the provider's culture for continuous improvement and focuses well on learner standards and performance.

There is a well established and effective system for observing teaching and training. Good customised support is provided for staff that may need to develop their teaching and learning sessions further.

The provider has been able to maintain significant improvement in learner standards and company operations during the last three years. This has coincided with the rapid growth of the business.

The provider uses nationally generated and agreed data and information to identify similar providers. They use this well to undertake benchmarking activities particularly relating to standards achieved by learners.

The provider takes full advantage of its membership of the National Training Federation for Wales (NTfW) to share good practice. It also uses impartial consultants and other specialists to provide opportunities for further improvement throughout the provider's operation.

The provider has made good progress in implementing the recommendations from the previous Estyn inspection report.

Partnership working: Good

ITEC has developed a range of effective partnerships in and around Cardiff. These include partnerships with other training providers, 14 to 19 partnerships in Cardiff and Newport, community groups, employers and young people's partnerships. The success of these partnerships is due to the high element of trust developed between ITEC staff and the partners. Staff and managers also stress the importance of reliability in the partnerships and the need for ITEC to deliver on the promises made to their partners.

ITEC has developed an Employer Engagement Strategy that sets out clearly how it sees partnership working as the best way of meeting the changing needs of employers and learners. The strategy communicates the purpose and principles of engagement with partners and the importance of the 'ITEC promise' to their partners.

ITEC has sub-contracting arrangements with five training providers and applies the same expectations in terms of high quality and standards to these sub-contractors. These sub-contractors provide training to around 6% of ITEC learners, but there are plans to increase this substantially.

Directors and managers have developed effective relationships with a wide range of partners to help and support their learners. These include Careers Wales and the Department for Work and Pensions. ITEC received the 'most valued partner award' from Careers Wales in 2007-2008 and in 2009-2010.

The partnership working with Newport City Council is developing well. The partnership with their community development team is providing an innovative programme of training for learners who have not succeeded at school and are not in education or training (NEETS).

Resource management: Good

Directors and Senior Managers monitor learner outcome data well and effectively use national benchmark comparators and data to continuously improve the quality of learning.

The provider has a well documented Training and Development strategy. All staff have a Training and Development Plan with good opportunities to gain appropriate training and qualifications to help improve their performance and career prospects.

Staff are appropriately qualified and have good knowledge of their industry sector and the qualification requirements.

The provider regularly reviews its resources for learners well and provides good resources for its staff. In particular, a digital pen is used to reduce time spent on paperwork administration and focus staff resources and time with learners.

Strategic and operational plans are comprehensive. The organisation has managed growth well whilst continuously improving the quality of learning and learner outcomes.

Financial budgets are devolved to Senior Managers and monitored regularly to suit increases in activity, such as needs relating to the implementation of the Qualifications Effectiveness Framework.

The provider manages its finances well and has managed to return modest surpluses every year within an environment of carefully planned expansion. ITEC has invested well in staff, buildings and training resources.

ITEC Training Solutions delivers good standards for its learners and provides good value for money.

Appendix 1

Learner Satisfaction

Responses to learner questionnaires completed before the inspection show that almost all learners would recommend this training provider to other people. Training staff help learners well to settle in the first weeks of their training programme and almost all learners receive good support from staff. Many learners who responded indicated that they enjoyed their training

Appendix 2

T0000025 : ITEC Training Solutions Ltd (formerly Cardiff ITEC)

WBL Provision - Success Rates by Sector/Subject Area and Programme Type

	2007/08						2008/09					
	ITEC Training Solutions Ltd (formerly Cardiff ITEC)			National Comparators			ITEC Training Solutions Ltd (formerly Cardiff ITEC)			National Comparators		
	Attained Learning Activities	Terminated Learning Activities	Success Rate	Attained Learning Activities	Terminated Learning Activities	Success Rate	Attained Learning Activities	Terminated Learning Activities	Success Rate	Attained Learning Activities	Terminated Learning Activities	Success Rate
By Sector / Subject Area												
Health, Public Services and Care	665	865	77%	12,145	17,650	69%	1,120	1,335	84%	14,080	17,900	79%
Education and Training	.	.	.	2,125	2,530	84%	20	20	95%	1,930	2,190	88%
Business, Administration and Law	200	270	75%	10,070	13,680	74%	210	225	94%	9,770	12,120	81%
Agriculture, Horticulture and Animal Care	.	.	.	1,140	1,545	74%	.	.	.	360	505	71%
Engineering and Manufacturing Technologies	25	55	44%	9,575	12,715	75%	105	120	91%	9,690	12,105	80%
Construction, Planning and the Built Environment	110	180	60%	5,675	8,050	70%	135	155	87%	6,785	8,750	78%
Information and Communication Technology	40	50	78%	4,080	5,790	70%	30	35	91%	4,620	6,070	76%
Retailing and Customer Service	170	205	82%	10,100	13,690	74%	205	265	79%	9,440	11,775	80%
Hair and Beauty	.	.	.	2,060	2,910	71%	.	.	.	2,140	2,690	80%
Hospitality and Catering	.	.	.	3,425	5,060	68%	.	.	.	2,485	3,420	73%
Leisure, Travel and Tourism	.	.	.	2,175	2,725	80%	.	.	.	1,910	2,285	84%
Arts, Media and Publishing	.	.	.	55	90	64%	.	.	.	10	10	100%
Unspecified Sector/Subject Area	540	790	68%	15,495	25,890	60%	565	655	86%	20,325	28,125	72%
Total	1,745	2,415	72%	78,115	112,325	70%	2,400	2,810	85%	83,540	107,940	77%
By Programme												
Foundation Modern Apprenticeships	610	740	82%	34,830	47,215	74%	950	1,110	85%	33,200	41,755	80%
Modern Apprenticeships	315	450	70%	20,130	27,750	73%	635	740	86%	21,110	26,460	80%
Modern Skills Diploma	25	40	62%	1,525	2,655	57%	5	5	100%	1,235	1,675	74%
Skill Build	800	1185	67%	21,480	34,160	63%	805	940	86%	27,230	36,780	74%
Other WBL programme	.	.	.	155	545	28%	5	15	35%	770	1,270	61%
Total	1,745	2415	72%	78,115	112,325	70%	2,400	2,810	85%	83,540	107,940	77%

Source: Lifelong Learning Wales Record (LLWR)

. denotes not applicable.

Numbers have been rounded to nearest multiple of 5.

Appendix 3

The inspection team

Stephen Davies HMI	Reporting Inspector
Sandra Barnard HMI	Team Inspector
Huw Collins HMI	Team Inspector
Alun Connick HMI	Team Inspector
Una Connolly HMI	Team Inspector
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