

Smart Training and Recruitment Ltd

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Contents

Background information	3
Inspection judgements	3
Scope of the inspection.....	3
Description of the provider	4
Summary of grades awarded.....	5
Overall judgement	6
Effectiveness of provision.....	6
Capacity to improve	6
Key strengths	7
Key areas for improvement	7
Main findings.....	8
Achievement and standards	8
Quality of provision	8
Leadership and management	9
Equality of opportunity	9
What learners like.....	11
What learners think could improve	11
Sector subject areas	12
Hospitality and catering	12
Business administration and Law	15
Learners' achievements	18

Background information

Inspection judgements

Inspectors use a four-point scale to summarise their judgements about achievement and standards, the quality of provision, and leadership and management, which includes a grade for equality of opportunity.

Key for inspection grades

Grade 1	Outstanding
Grade 2	Good
Grade 3	Satisfactory
Grade 4	Inadequate

Further information can be found on how inspection judgements are made on www.ofsted.gov.uk

Scope of the inspection

In deciding the scope of the inspection, inspectors take account of the provider's most recent self-assessment report and development plans, and comments from the local Learning and Skills Council (LSC) or other funding body. Where appropriate, inspectors also consider the previous inspection report (www.ofsted.gov.uk), reports from the inspectorates' quality monitoring or annual assessment visits, and data on learners and their achievements over the period since the previous inspection.

In addition to reporting on overall effectiveness of the organisation, its capacity to improve further, achievement and standards, quality of provision and leadership and management, this inspection focused on specialist provision in:

- Hospitality and catering
- Business, administration and law

Description of the provider

1. Smart Training and Recruitment Limited (Smart) is located on the Isle of Wight and was formed in February 2003, as a private limited company. It took over a Learning and Skills Council (LSC) contract formerly held since 1999 by an organisation which employed several members of staff who transferred to Smart.
2. Two directors have overall responsibility for training at Smart and they employ 20 full-time members of staff and two part-time freelance tutors. There are 14 staff who are qualified assessors and six who are internal verifiers. The provider employs two staff members who have information, advice and guidance and health and safety qualifications. The remaining staff provide administration and support. One director is responsible for finance and data management and the other is responsible for management of the curriculum and training and recruitment teams.
3. Smart has a contract with the Hampshire and Isle of Wight LSC for apprenticeships and Train to Gain in hospitality and catering, business administration and customer service and a small retail programme. At the time of the inspection, 81 learners were enrolled on apprenticeships, 43 on advanced apprenticeships and 30 on Train to Gain programmes. The delivery of Train to Gain started in 2006–07 and the provider did not have sufficient meaningful performance data at the time of the inspection to include a data table for Train to Gain in the inspection report. Smart has acquired three recent new contracts on the mainland, but had not recruited any learners for these programmes at the time of the inspection.
4. The Isle of Wight ranks as the second most deprived area in the south east of England. The areas of deprivation are centred on the urban communities of Newport, Ryde and Ventnor. Smart has a centre in Newport, which is one of the most deprived wards in England. According to the 2001 census, 98.7% of the population of the Isle of Wight is from a white background. Some 5% of the learners at Smart are from a minority ethnic background.
5. Most businesses on the island employ fewer than 25 employees. Small to medium-sized companies dominate the island's business sector. The sectors that contribute most to the local economy are construction, commercial services and retail services. Hospitality and tourism are the major employers.

Summary of grades awarded

Effectiveness of provision	Good: Grade 2
Capacity to improve	Good: Grade 2
Achievement and standards	Good: Grade 2
Quality of provision	Good: Grade 2
Leadership and management	Good: Grade 2
Equality of opportunity	Contributory grade: Outstanding: Grade 1

Sector subject areas

Hospitality and catering	Good: Grade 2
Business, administration and law	Good: Grade 2

Overall judgement

Effectiveness of provision

Good: Grade 2

6. The overall effectiveness of Smart is good. Leadership and management are good and the arrangements for equality of opportunity are outstanding. Provision in hospitality and catering and business administration and law are good.

Capacity to improve

Good: Grade 2

7. The provider demonstrates good capacity to improve. Managers and staff have implemented improvements successfully since the previous inspection. The action plans for continuous improvement are thorough. Monitoring and evaluation of provision is comprehensive, particularly the use of data to assess performance. Development plans and related target-setting have a clear focus on improvement. The targets are well communicated to staff, who use their skills effectively to raise standards. On most programmes, success rates are high and improving.
8. The effectiveness of steps taken to promote the improvement since the previous inspection is good. The previous weaknesses identified in leadership and management and the quality of provision have been resolved very effectively. Smart has maintained and developed the good support for learners identified at the previous inspection particularly well.
9. The arrangements for quality assurance are comprehensive and rigorous. The quality improvement cycle is planned well. Smart has designed the quality policies and procedures effectively to monitor and evaluate the learners' experiences. Reviews of the quality arrangements are thorough and support the process of improvement. Managers are closely involved in the development of quality arrangements. They promote and support continuous improvement very effectively within the organisation. The provider monitors quality well to contribute to development plans and self-assessment.
10. The accuracy and reliability of the self-assessment process is good. The current report is self-critical and evaluative. Smart makes effective use of feedback from learners and employers to contribute to the process. Staff are consulted fully as part of the self-assessment process and make an effective contribution. The provider uses data well to support the judgements in the most recent report. Inspectors' judgements matched most of the strengths identified in the report. Smart has implemented actions for improvement successfully. Some parts of the report are too descriptive and do not contain sufficiently detailed comments to justify the strengths and areas for improvement. The provider has started to prepare its next self-assessment report recently. The process is at an early stage, but it has included very effective involvement of staff to identify key strengths and areas for improvement.

Key strengths

- Good progress for learners
- Good development of personal and practical skills
- Excellent success rates for advanced apprentices in hospitality and catering
- Good and improving success rates in business administration and law
- Very effective on and off-the-job training
- Good development and use of learning plans
- Particularly high levels of learner support
- Particularly effective leadership and management
- Good development of quality improvement arrangements
- Excellent arrangements for equality of opportunity
- Very good promotion of equality and diversity

Key areas for improvement

- Declining success rates for apprentices in professional cookery

Main findings

Achievement and standards

Good: Grade 2

11. Achievement and standards are good. Learners on all programmes make good progress. Timely success rates for advanced apprentices and apprentices are good and many learners complete their programmes ahead of their planned end date.
12. Success rates for advanced apprentices in hospitality and catering are excellent and have improved from 40% in 2004–05 to 81% in 2006–07. For apprentices, the overall success rate has decreased for the same period from 60% to 54% due to the declining success rate on the professional cookery programme. Smart has taken appropriate action to rectify this decline and current progress and retention rates are good.
13. In business administration and law, success rates are good and improving. In 2006–07, the success rates for apprentices and advanced apprentices were 67% and 73%, respectively.
14. All learners develop good personal and practical skills. They work well in teams and frequently obtain responsible roles at work. Learners improve their personal presentation and develop good social skills. In business administration, employers speak highly of the practical skills that learners develop. The draft self-assessment report for 2006–07 identifies most of these strengths in achievement and standards.

Quality of provision

Good: Grade 2

15. The quality of provision is good. Training is very effective. All the learning sessions observed by inspectors were good. Learners are generally highly motivated and actively engaged in their learning. Tutors manage sessions well with clear learning plans and identified outcomes. They link training carefully to learners' experiences in the workplace. Most learners receive good on-the-job training.
16. Individual learning plans are good and staff use them well in conjunction with learners and employers. In hospitality and catering, the detailed identification of training and learning support needs and suitable additional qualifications is particularly good. Staff carry out regular reviews and monitor learners' progress thoroughly. They set and record clear targets and use the reviews effectively to explore broader issues of equality and diversity, health and safety and learners own lifestyles and welfare. Training advisors carry out assessment regularly in the

workplace and use appropriate assessment methods according to learners individual needs.

17. All learners have an effective initial assessment. Staff analyse learning styles thoroughly and use the outcomes to good effect throughout the programme. Induction is satisfactory and learners have a good recall of the range of topics covered, including health and safety and equality of opportunity.
18. All learners receive high levels of support, particularly on hospitality programmes. Training advisers visit learners according to their individual needs. They visit many of the learners very frequently and arrange the visits to suit learners' and employers' working hours. Learners who require help with literacy, numeracy and language skills receive very effective additional support. The provider also gives very good support to learners to overcome personal difficulties. The provision of information, advice and guidance to learners is appropriate. Inspectors' judgements on the quality of provision broadly match those of the provider in its draft 2006–07 self-assessment report.

Leadership and management

Good: Grade 2

Equality of opportunity

Contributory grade: Outstanding: Grade 1

19. Leadership and management are good. Strategic planning is structured well and is systematic. Smart carries out comprehensive monitoring and reviews of performance using good management data, as identified in the self-assessment report. There is a strong focus on raising achievement. Senior managers set high standards for the provision and clear performance targets. Operational management is good and staff manage programme delivery well. Internal communications are excellent. Staff are well informed about developments and have a good understanding of their roles. Smart uses meetings and team days very effectively to share information and involve staff in planning. Employer engagement is good, as is partnership working. The provider actively supports 14-19 initiatives and the enterprise agenda. Marketing of provision is good and the provider runs high profile and successful events and open days to promote learning.
20. The development of quality arrangements is good. Smart has a well-designed quality improvement cycle. Policies and procedures are clear and cover all key areas. Staff have a good awareness of the relevant procedures. A culture of continuous improvement is well established. An effective system is in place for the observation of training and learning. Staff review the quality arrangements effectively.
21. The provider has a satisfactory range of resources, which it manages efficiently and effectively. Most staff are well qualified with appropriate experience. There are sufficient staff resources to meet learners' needs. Smart reviews training

advisers' caseloads frequently and manages staff induction and appraisals well. The provider plans staff development well to support learners' achievement.

22. The strategy for the management of literacy, language and numeracy support is satisfactory. This was a weakness at the previous inspection. Learners with additional needs receive effective support from the skills for life tutor or training advisers.
23. The arrangements for equality of opportunity and diversity are excellent. A comprehensive and well-written range of policies and procedures covers all aspects of equality and diversity. The learner induction and review process is very effective in raising learners' awareness of grievance procedures, bullying, harassment and discrimination. Induction also covers other important topics well, such as healthy living. Smart acts quickly and decisively to resolve learners' concerns and has strong links with local organisations to support learners on a wide range of issues. The support that staff give to learners is outstanding, as is the support that staff receive from the company. All staff demonstrate a very strong commitment to the welfare and success of their learners. The training centre has been adapted appropriately to meet the needs of learners with restricted mobility.
24. Smart promotes equality and diversity very well. Staff discuss equality and diversity issues at all team meetings and have a good awareness of equality of opportunity. The provider offers learners and employers good, accessible and up-to-date information, support and guidance on equal opportunities through personal contact, a comprehensive website and an informative newsletter. Learners' understanding of equality and diversity is good. Smart celebrates learners' successes well through a range of events, including a high profile annual awards evening. The provider promotes equality and diversity well in its marketing material and challenges gender stereotyping very effectively through well-planned recruitment and information events. Smart is involved in developing 14–19 provision with a wide range of local organisations to attract and engage different types of young people to its programmes. This is highly valued by partners.

What learners like:

- 'I really enjoy my course'
- Very good support from training advisers - 'All I have to do is ring'
- 'Training through my real work'
- Clear instructions on what to do before the next visit
- The friendliness, and feeling part of the Smart team
- 'Just everything about them, they're good in all aspects'

What learners think could improve:

- Health and safety sessions
- The frequency of visits to enable learners to complete their qualification more quickly
- 'The information technology suite needs updating to enable colour printing'

Sector subject areas

Hospitality and catering

Good: Grade 2

Context

25. Smart provides training for 119 work-based learners in hospitality and catering. Of these, 37 are advanced apprentices, 60 are apprentices and 22 are Train to Gain learners. The main area of provision is professional cookery, which accounts for almost half of the learners. The remaining learners are on programmes which include food and drink service, reception, hospitality supervision and housekeeping. All learners are in full-time employment and are either recruited directly from industry or placed into full-time employment by the provider. Some 52% of the learners are women and 8% are from minority ethnic groups. Smart works with 56 employers across the Isle of Wight and they range from small companies to national chains. The provider carries out training and assessment predominantly in the workplace, but also at the training centre.

Strengths

- Excellent success rates for advanced apprentices
- Good development of personal and practical skills
- Good development and use of learning plans
- Particularly high levels of learner support

Areas for improvement

- Declining success rates for apprentices in professional cookery

Achievement and standards

26. Achievement and standards are good. Success rates for the advanced apprentices are excellent. They have improved from 40% in 2004–05 to 69% in 2005–06, and 81% in 2006–07. Progression to the advanced apprenticeship from the apprenticeship programme is good. For apprentices, the overall success rate for the same period has decreased from 60% to 54%. This decline is due to the poor performance of the Level 2 professional cookery programme. Overall success rates are above the national averages for framework achievement. The Train to Gain programme has only started recently, but learners are making good progress. Timely success on all programmes is good and many learners complete ahead of their targeted end date.

27. Development of personal and practical skills is good. Food preparation learners produce complex dishes well and work independently with little guidance or support. Learners have good customer service skills in food and drink service and front office and are able to work with customers well. They demonstrate good

social skills when dealing with complaints. Learners work very effectively in teams and advanced apprentices take up positions of responsibility at work. Their personal presentation is good. Key skills success rates are high. Learners have the opportunity to gain additional national vocational qualification (NVO) units and qualifications such as food hygiene certificates and British Institute of Innkeeping awards.

Quality of provision

28. The quality of provision is good. The development and use of individual learning plans is good. The plans are comprehensive and involve learners and employers fully. The identification of the training required for learners is detailed and includes learning support needs and additional qualifications. Learners have a good awareness of when they should complete their qualifications. They organise their portfolios well, which contain a good range of workplace evidence, illustrated imaginatively with photographs. Some learners are not involved fully in the recording of evidence and progress in their portfolios. Training advisers often record the evidence for learners. Staff plan assessment well and involve learners fully in the process. Training advisers' recording and evaluation of learners' performance is good. Smart manages off-the-job training sessions well with clear learning plans and identified outcomes. The provider has well-presented learning resources and learners have access to relevant materials to support their learning.
29. Staff support learners particularly well. Training advisers visit learners according to their individual needs. They visit many learners two or three times a month, or even more frequently. Staff arrange visits to suit learners' and employers' needs. Advisers establish a close rapport and good professional relationships with learners and employers. Learners who need help with literacy and numeracy skills receive very effective additional support in the workplace and at the training centre from a specialist member of staff. Staff give specialist language support to learners for whom English is a foreign language. They support learners who have personal difficulties very well. Staff encourage learners successfully to adopt a healthy life style.
30. The range of hospitality programmes meets the needs of local employers appropriately. Training meet the needs of individual learners well and often includes additional qualifications. Train to Gain learners study for literacy and numeracy qualifications and apprentices achieve food hygiene certificates.

Leadership and management

31. Leadership and management are good. Training advisers agree individual targets at appraisal meetings twice a year and review them at meetings each month. The staff team works well together to evaluate and improve their performance at fortnightly team meetings and in frequent informal meetings. Staff understand and use the management information system effectively. Training advisers are very experienced in the hospitality industry and have appropriate qualifications.

The provider allocates work according to training advisers' individual qualifications and experience. Smart bases an extensive programme of staff development on the needs of the business and individual members of staff. Smart responds rapidly and effectively to requests from employers and keeps them well informed through regular newssheets and an employer's forum. A small number of employers are not sufficiently involved in the training programmes. The provider owns a gastro pub, which is an excellent resource in which learners train outside of their workplace and where staff can carry out assessment. Smart employs some learners at the gastro pub. Staff teams use their own accurate evaluation of their performance to carry out self-assessment. The most recent self-assessment report contains areas for improvement, which Smart has rectified subsequently. Many improvements originate from within the team who then implement them with the approval of the management. Staff work well together and seek to improve this area of work continuously.

Business, administration and Law

Good: Grade 2

Context

32. Currently 46 learners are enrolled on programmes in business administration and customer service. Business administration courses started in 2006 and there are currently 17 apprentices, five advanced apprentices and eight Train to Gain learners in this area of the provision. Sixteen learners are enrolled on customer service programmes, of which seven are apprentices, six are advanced apprentices and three are on Train to Gain. All apprentices and Train to Gain learners are employed. Apprentices attend off-the-job training sessions at the provider's premises. Smart recruits learners from all parts of the Isle of Wight. Four assessors, one of whom is an internal verifier and two additional internal verifiers work in this area of the provision. The provider offers a pre-apprenticeship pilot programme in business administration for 10 learners. The pre-apprenticeship learners work towards a qualification in employment skills and units from the business administration technical certificate. They also gain additional qualifications in food safety, health and safety and first aid.

Strengths

- Good and improving success rates
- Good progress and development of skills for learners
- Very effective on and off-the-job training

Areas for improvement

No significant areas for improvement

Achievement and standards

33. Achievement and standards are good. Success rates are good and improving. Apprenticeship success rates have risen from 50% in 2004–05 to 67% in 2006–07. Advanced apprentice success rates remain high at 71% in 2005–06 and 73% in 2006–07. Overall success rates have risen from 50% to 68% in the three years to 2006–07. Timely success rates show the same pattern of improvement, rising from 46% to 65% over the three-year period. All advanced apprentices who are successful complete their qualification before their targeted end date.

34. Learners make good progress and develop a wide range of skills. They acquire good workplace skills, such as the use of Sage accounting, improved customer service and better telephone skills. Learners comment that they enjoy their learning very much. Employers value the skills that learners develop highly, particularly computing skills. Apprentices develop their presentation skills well. Their ability to work effectively as part of a team improves significantly and they

grow in confidence. Learners develop good research and evaluation skills as part of their project work. Portfolios are of a high standard with a good range of evidence. Learners make good progress. One learner has completed their NVQ Level 2 in five months. Learners progress well in the workplace and take up positions of increased responsibility. Learners on the pre-apprenticeship programme also make good progress. Attendance rates are good on all programmes.

Quality of provision

35. On- and off-the-job training are very effective. Staff plan learning sessions very well and structure them to incorporate a range of varied activities so that learners work together as part of a team as well as engaging in individual reflective activity. The learners are highly motivated and actively involved in their learning. Training is flexible. Staff run sessions late in the afternoon and in the evening for those learners who find it difficult to get away from work. Smart integrates training well with workplace activities. Learners complete tasks, which are relevant to their own company. Most learners also receive very effective on-the-job training, ranging from structured courses to coaching at work. Learners speak highly of the training they receive. The pre-apprentices value the certification they achieve during the programme.
36. Assessment is carried out regularly in the workplace and staff use a range of appropriate methods to suit the needs of the individual learner and to meet the NVQ assessment criteria. Training advisers who carry out particularly good assessment combine it well with coaching in the workplace.
37. The provision for language, literacy and numeracy is satisfactory. Where staff identify a need for additional support, the provider responds quickly. Initial assessment is satisfactory. All learners have an initial assessment of their literacy and numeracy needs as well as tests for learning styles. Training advisers use the outcomes effectively to plan programmes. Induction is satisfactory and learners have a good recall of the topics discussed. Staff focus on health and safety particularly well.
38. Smart carries out effective reviews on a quarterly basis. Staff and employers review learners' progress thoroughly. Training advisers set clear targets for learners. They use resource packs well to improve learners' understanding of equality and diversity and safe working practices. Individual learning plans are effective. They are detailed, relevant and give clear guidance on evidence collection. Staff update them regularly as part of the support that learners receive.
39. Many employers offer very good support to learners. They are helpful in identifying opportunities for learners to capture evidence for their portfolios. Training advisers offer positive support routinely for personal and progression issues during their regular visits to the workplace.

Leadership and management

40. Smart manages the business management and law programme area well. The course team is small, cohesive and highly committed with a strong focus on the learner. The training advisors have developed very good working relationships with employers and effectively engage them in developing learners' progress.
41. Teaching resources are satisfactory with two well-equipped training rooms. All staff are appropriately qualified and experienced. Meetings are well structured and staff use them appropriately to meet up as a team and with their manager. Smart makes good use of data. All staff receive a comprehensive monthly update of their case load, which covers unit achievement and any issues with individual learners. Staff check employers' policies and supply copies of those written by Smart where none is available. Internal verification is satisfactory and covers all constituent elements of the assessment process. All staff are actively involved in the production of the self-assessment report. The report was due to be updated at the time of the inspection and does not currently reflect the improvements made by Smart during the last year.

Annex

Learners' achievements

Success rates on work-based learning apprenticeship programmes managed by the provider 2004 to 2007

Programme	End Year	Success rate	No. of learners*	Provider NVQ rate**	National NVQ rate**	Provider framework rate**	National framework rate**
Advanced Apprenticeships	04-05	overall	5	60%	48%	40%	34%
		timely	5	60%	31%	40%	22%
	05-06	overall	56	73%	53%	70%	44%
		timely	57	67%	34%	70%	27%
	06-07	overall	63	75%		75% ***	
		timely	62	74%		74% ***	
Apprenticeships	04-05	overall	66	76%	51%	58%	39%
		timely	70	70%	29%	53%	22%
	05-06	overall	192	54%	58%	52%	52%
		timely	189	50%	38%	44%	34%
	06-07	overall	149	59%		58% ***	
		timely	149	58%		57% ***	

Note 'At the time of the inspection - LSC data for 2006-07 had yet to be fully validated'

- * Learners who leave later than originally planned are counted in the year they actually leave. This group of learners are then added to the learners who planned to complete in a given year and did so or left earlier than planned
- ** College/provider and national qualification success rates are calculated using LSC published data derived from the 'Individual Learning Record
- *** 2006-07 data is not validated by the LSC at the time of the inspection