



*The Education and Training Inspectorate -
Promoting Improvement*



Providing Inspection Services for
Department of Education
Department for Employment and Learning
Department of Culture, Arts and Leisure

Education and Training Inspectorate

Training for Success Provision

in

Strabane Training Services

Inspected: November 2009

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In this report, proportions may be described as percentages, common fractions and in more general quantitative terms. Where more general terms are used, they should be interpreted as follows:

Almost/nearly all	-	more than 90%
Most	-	75% - 90%
A majority	-	50% - 74%
A significant minority	-	30% - 49%
A minority	-	10% - 29%
Very few/a small number	-	less than 10%

All the statistics in this report have been supplied and verified by Strabane Training Services

Grading System

The Education and Training Inspectorate use the following performance levels (grades) in reports:

Performance Level	Grade	Descriptor
Outstanding	1	Outstanding characterised by excellence
Very Good	2	Consistently good; major strengths
Good	3	Important strengths in most of the provision. Areas for improvement which organisation has the capacity to address
Satisfactory	4	Overall sound/satisfactory but with areas for improvement in important areas which need to be addressed
Inadequate	5	A few strengths; significant areas for improvement which require prompt action
Unsatisfactory	6	Poor; major shortcomings which require urgent action

PART ONE

SUMMARY

1. CONTEXT

1.1 Strabane Training Services (STS) is a wholly owned subsidiary of Strabane Training Services (1990) Ltd, a company limited by guarantee with charitable status. The company was founded in 1978 and since then has provided a range of training programmes to young people and adults in the Strabane District Council area. In September 2007, STS was contracted by the Department for Employment and Learning (the Department) to offer the Training for Success and ApprenticeshipsNI programmes.

1.2 Strabane Training Services has two premises in Strabane. All directed training in the construction crafts of bricklaying, painting and decorating, and plastering, is provided in its workshop premises in the STS Business Park within Ballycolman Industrial Estate. The remaining training programmes in business administration, information technology and retail, are provided in its new town centre location, which was opened in September 2009. The senior managers report that this new facility will support the achievement of a number of key strategic aims, including an increase in cross-community and female enrolments, and the provision of better opportunities for trainees with physical disabilities to undertake training.

1.3 Strabane has higher levels of unemployment than the rest of Northern Ireland. The latest statistics (October 2009) published by the Department of Enterprise, Trade and Industry report that the percentage of the available workforce in the Strabane District Council area, registered as claiming a specific unemployment related benefit is currently 7.1%, this is 2.3% above the Northern Ireland total of 4.8%.

1.4 The trainees on the Training for Success programme are recruited mainly from Strabane town, with a small number recruited from the wider Strabane District Council area. The overall academic profile of the trainees on entry to the programme is low. At the time of the inspection, a majority of the trainees (69%) had no formal qualifications. A minority (23%) had achieved General Certificate of Secondary Education (GCSE) qualifications, or equivalent, at grades D to G. The vast majority (97%) of the trainees did not have a formal qualification in English or mathematics.

2. PROVISION

2.1 During the inspection, 35 trainees were registered on the Training for Success programme; of these, 20 were registered on the Skills for Your Life strand, eleven were on the Skills for Work strand, three were on the Pre-apprenticeship strand, and one trainee was registered on the Programme-led Apprenticeship strand. Sixteen of the trainees joined the programme in September 2009 and with the exception of one trainee, who was on the Programme-led Apprenticeship strand, all of these trainees were registered on the Skills for Your Life strand. None of the trainees who had registered in September 2009 had completed the 12 week assessment or the preparation for employment period at the time of the inspection. Of the remaining 19 existing trainees, only eight (43%) were in work placements. The trainees with work placements attend STS for three days each week and are in the work placement for two days. The remaining trainees attend STS in accordance with the guidelines for their programme.

2.2 With the exception of the trainee on the Programme-led Apprenticeship, who is completing a business and administration programme at level 2, the trainees are completing training in a range of professional and technical areas at entry-level or level 1. Of the 35 trainees, 23 of them are registered on construction programmes, eight are registered on

business administration programmes, three are registered on retail programmes and one trainee is completing an information technology programme. Thirty-four trainees are also completing essential skills qualifications in literacy, numeracy, and information and communication technology (ICT) at various levels.

2.3 Almost all of the training provision is delivered in-house by STS staff. The provision for personal development training has been subcontracted to Opportunity Youth.

3. THE INSPECTION

3.1 The Education and Training Inspectorate (the Inspectorate) carried out an inspection of the Training for Success programme in STS in November 2009. A team of four inspectors observed a total of 35 trainees in both directed training and in the workplace, including a training session delivered by Opportunity Youth. Discussions were held with the manager, tutors, administration staff, workplace supervisors, employers and trainees. The inspection team also examined samples of trainees' work, portfolios of evidence, the trainees' personal training plans (PTPs), the organisation's self-evaluation report, and other relevant documentation.

3.2 The arrangements for the inspection of pastoral care and the safeguarding of vulnerable groups includes the opportunity for trainees to complete a confidential questionnaire prior to the inspection, as well as meetings by the inspection team with groups of trainees across professional and technical programmes. Thirty questionnaires were issued to trainees, 25 (83%) of which were returned to the Inspectorate. The returns show that the trainees' experiences in STS are mostly very good. They appreciate the good support they receive within STS and from the discussions, there is evidence that they are aware of what to do if they have any worries about their care and well-being. The Inspectorate has reported to the manager the outcomes of the questionnaires and the discussions held with trainees.

4. MAIN FINDINGS

4.1 In the areas inspected, the quality of training provided by STS is good. The organisation has important strengths in most of its educational and pastoral provision. The inspection has identified areas for improvement which STS has demonstrated the capacity to address. The Education and Training Inspectorate will monitor the organisation's progress on the areas for improvement.

4.2 The main strengths are the:

- effective leadership and management of the training provision;
- well-designed training provision which is meeting the needs of the trainees, most of whom present with multiple barriers to learning and employment;
- positive behaviour demonstrated by nearly all of the trainees underpinned by the good relationships between the tutors, staff and trainees;
- good quality of the training and learning in most of the training sessions observed, including the good standards of work achieved by most of the trainees;

- good overall retention rate, and excellent overall success and progression rates; and
- very good quality of the provision in essential skills.

4.3 The main areas for improvement are the:

- inadequate provision for careers education, information, advice and guidance (CEIAG);
- inadequate quality of provision in retailing, including the lack of opportunity for trainees, in both retail and business administration, to undertake appropriate practical work-based activities; and
- lack of adequate opportunities for trainees to access work placements.

Table of Grades

Overall performance level (grade)	Good (3)
Contributory performance levels (grades)	
Leadership and Management	Good (3)
Achievements and Standards	Good (3)
Quality of Provision for Learning	Good (3)
Area of Learning	
Construction	Good (3)
Essential Skills	Very Good (2)

PART TWO

OVERALL QUALITY OF PROVISION

5. LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

5.1 Strabane Training Services is led and managed effectively. Good relationships exist between the manager and all staff. An open style of management has been developed, with staff encouraged to be proactive and innovative in their job roles. Governance arrangements are effective and the management committee provide appropriate support and guidance to the manager. The chair of the management committee is well-informed and actively involved in much of the work of STS.

5.2 Strabane Training Services offers a well-designed programme of training provision which is meeting the needs of the trainees, providing them with good opportunities to progress in their learning and acquisition of skills. This comprises a range of social and personal development enhancement programmes, including first aid, health and safety training and the essential skills in literacy, numeracy, and ICT. In addition, the trainees undertake professional and technical training across all strands of the Training for Success programme.

5.3 The arrangements for self-evaluation and quality improvement planning are well-developed. An appropriate business planning process is in place and the quality improvement planning process is good. An appropriate quality improvement cycle has been developed to allow management and staff to monitor and review the provision on an on-going basis. As a consequence, the improvement plan is regularly updated and is an inclusive, effective working document.

5.4 Most staff are appropriately qualified and deployed effectively. One tutor, however, delivering the essential skills of numeracy and ICT is not qualified to deliver the qualifications under the guidelines from the Department, but this is being addressed appropriately by STS. An appropriate system is in place for the continuous professional development of staff; this includes a reflective journal which allows staff to evaluate any staff development undertaken and state how it aligns to the business aims and objectives of STS. Although peer observation procedures are in place, these need to be more formalised to allow the outcomes of any observation sessions to be more effectively recorded, and subsequently reviewed by the manager and tutors.

5.5 The quality of the physical resources are good. Management have invested in good quality information and learning technology (ILT) equipment, including laptops, data projectors and I-beam technology, to support tutors in the delivery of directed training sessions. The new town centre training facility offers a modern learning environment for the trainees, with good access to industry standard ICT facilities, and paper-based and on-line learning resources. There is, however, a lack of paper-based resources for the essential skills provision within the new facility. The workshop facilities for delivering construction under the Training for Success programme are located in the Ballycolman premises of STS. The facilities are adequate in size for the numbers currently registered and are well-equipped, including good access to ICT equipment for the trainees.

5.6 The provision for work placements for trainees on the Skills for Work and pre-apprenticeship strands is inadequate. STS reports considerable difficulties in finding and securing appropriate work placements in the current economic climate. Management and staff need to review their current arrangements for sourcing work placements, including the development of new links to regional and national employers and with the voluntary

sector. Consideration needs also be given to the use of appropriate internal business enterprise activities to assist the trainees in the development of their employability skills, and better use of site visits and guest speakers to improve the trainees' awareness and understanding of the work environment.

6. ACHIEVEMENTS AND STANDARDS

6.1 A significant number of trainees in STS have multiple barriers to learning, including personal and social issues. Around 20% of the trainees were previously enrolled on alternative education programmes while still at school. Over the past two years, there has been an increase in the number of trainees who have been educated out of school or have not attended school. In the training sessions observed, the trainees are well-motivated and engage effectively in their learning. They have developed good working relationships with their tutors. Attendance at directed training is good in construction craft classes, modest in essential skills, but is poor in business administration and retail.

6.2 The trainees achieve good standards of work and are making good progress in their learning, given their prior achievements. They are keen to achieve their target qualifications and progress to further training and work. In construction, trainees were observed in a number of activities including applying a scratch coat in plastering, building a cavity wall, and carrying out a range of tasks in painting and decorating. The tutors use effective language to motivate the trainees, and appropriate questioning is used to elicit positive responses from them and further develop their motivation and confidence. Although the trainees in construction are provided with good opportunities to sample a range of craft areas and to achieve certification such as a health and safety certificate at the beginning of their programmes, most of them are making slow progress in the achievement of their professional and technical qualifications. The monitoring of progress and target-setting by the tutors is not undertaken effectively.

6.3 In the essential skill of numeracy, the trainees complete one of two action-based activities; weight and health which is completed by the ICT trainees, or business planning which is completed by the construction and retail trainees. It is inappropriate that all of the trainees use the same data, which is provided by the tutor, and they all complete the same calculations. The business planning activity is only vocationally relevant to the trainees undertaking the painting and decorating programme. Further work needs to be undertaken by the tutors to develop more appropriate action-based activities to better meet the needs of the trainees, across the professional and technical areas. In addition, spelling mistakes in the trainees' written work, including words pertinent to their professional and technical areas, are not identified or corrected by a small number of the tutors.

6.4 The quality of nearly all of the work placements is good. The employers are supportive and the work placements provide opportunities for the trainees to develop both generic work skills and relevant professional and technical skills. Regular monitoring and reviews of the trainees' progress are carried out by tutors and the placement officer. Attendance in work placement is variable; it is good in construction but low in business administration and retail. In addition, the use of an entertainment complex as a retail placement is inappropriate.

6.5 Over the past two years, the retention rate for the Training for Success programme is good at 89%. The success and progression rates are excellent at 100% and 94% respectively.

6.6 Over the same period, the success rates in both the essential and key skills are excellent at 100%. All trainees who completed their Training for Success strand achieved an essential skills qualification in literacy and numeracy, and a key skills qualification in ICT, at a level in line with their prior achievements and the findings of the initial assessment process.

7. QUALITY OF PROVISION FOR LEARNING

7.1 In most of the training sessions observed, the quality of the training and learning was good or better. The tutors were well-prepared and used an effective range of teaching strategies to engage the trainees. The training sessions were well-planned and supported by a good range of appropriate resources. In construction, the bricklaying/plastering tutor uses effectively the opportunities presented in the vocational aspects of the programme, such as estimating quantities or lengths, to consolidate and further develop the trainees' numeracy skills.

7.2 In a majority of the training sessions observed, the tutors are making effective use of ILT to support their training and learning. They are also making effective use of electronic learning resources and communication facilities to enable the trainees to submit work electronically. In essential skills, for example, very good use is made of ILT to support trainees in their learning and to motivate and engage them in developing and applying their essential skills in a range of meaningful contexts. All work completed by trainees in class is e-mailed to the tutor at the end of the session. The trainees are also encouraged to complete additional work on-line and forward to the tutor. To date, however, only a small number of trainees are using this facility. In construction, although good use is made of electronic resources in directed training sessions, the arrangements for trainees to access resources outside of class need to be further developed.

7.3 Good arrangements are in place for the initial assessment of the trainees' literacy, numeracy and ICT skills. A good range of initial assessment tools, both computer and paper-based, are used along with diagnostic tests to determine the trainees' competences and identify any additional support needs. The initial assessment is carried out at the beginning of the training programme for new trainees and a further assessment of their literacy and numeracy then takes place before the trainees' levels of competence are formally entered on their personal training plan (PTP); this is good practice. This process underpins the validity of the original initial assessment, when the trainees have settled sufficiently into their programme and are more engaged with the development of their essential skills.

7.4 The quality of the PTPs is good. The PTPs are individual in nature and capture well the outcomes of initial assessments and identify appropriately any additional educational needs. The plans include targets for achievement and progress, although these need to be more specific with clear, measureable targets set. In addition, the monitoring and review of trainees in both directed training and the workplace is not yet captured effectively within the PTPs.

7.5 The provision for the essential skills of literacy, numeracy, and ICT within STS is very good.

7.6 The provision for pastoral care within STS is good. The trainees value the support provided by the tutors and staff.

7.7 The arrangements for safeguarding young people and vulnerable adults reflect good practice and are in line with the Vulnerable Groups (NI) Order 2007. Strabane Training Services promotes effectively the safeguarding of young people and vulnerable adults. Additional training in this area, for staff and members of the managing committee, has been organised. The manager should ensure that the arrangements continue to be monitored and reviewed on an ongoing basis.

7.8 The provision for careers education, information, advice and guidance (CEIAG) is inadequate. The vocational tutors provide the trainees on a regular basis with appropriate, industry-specific information on job roles and responsibilities. In addition, the trainees have many opportunities to undertake personal careers planning during discrete directed training sessions in careers, and in employability and personal development, and when they compile their progress files. There is, however, excessive overlap and duplication in the content of these programmes, which frequently repeat work the trainees undertook while in school. The trainees also have too few opportunities to develop Jobsearch skills to help them secure work placements at key stages of their training, particularly those trainees on the Skills for Work strand. The trainees' knowledge and understanding of employment and training pathways is poor. Overall, too little use is made of external contacts to enhance the trainees' knowledge and understanding of industry, through the use of guest speakers or industrial or site visits. There are also only limited opportunities for trainees to develop business enterprise activities.

7.9 During the inspection, the retail tutor was not available and it is unacceptable that no cover was provided for the trainees; as a result, they were left to work unsupervised, and no structured programme of activities was in place for them to follow. In addition, there are too few opportunities for those trainees in both retail and business administration, and who are not in a work placement, to undertake appropriate, practical work-based activities and to develop the necessary employability skills within STS.

PART THREE

PROFESSIONAL AND TECHNICAL AREA REPORTS

8. CONSTRUCTION

8.1 In construction, the quality of training provided by STS is good. The organisation has important strengths in most of its training and pastoral provision. The inspection has identified areas for improvement which STS has demonstrated the capacity to address. The Education and Training Inspectorate will monitor the organisation's progress on the areas for improvement.

8.2 The main strengths are the:

- well-designed programmes in construction, and the good opportunities for trainees on the Skills for Your Life programme to undertake relevant industry standard qualifications;
- good occupational standards developed by the trainees in bricklaying and plastering;
- supportive, enthusiastic and committed tutors with good occupational competences; and
- good or better quality of most of the directed training sessions observed.

8.3 The main areas for improvement are the:

- lack of effective monitoring and target-setting for trainees in their vocational units;
- insufficient enhancement of the work-related learning experiences of trainees, such as the use of site visits and guest speakers from industry; and
- provision of more support to trainees on the Skills for Work programme, to gain and sustain appropriate work placements.

Grade Awarded	Total No of Trainees
3	23

9. ESSENTIAL SKILLS

9.1 In the provision for essential skills the quality of training provided by STS is very good. Strabane Training Services is meeting very effectively the educational and pastoral needs of the trainees; and has demonstrated its capacity for sustained self-improvement.

9.2 The main strengths are the:

- excellent success rates at 100%;
- high priority given by management to the essential skills provision;
- good opportunities for trainees to achieve essential skills qualifications at a range of levels appropriate to their prior achievement in all three skill areas;
- good quality of the initial assessment process;
- very good quality of teaching and learning in all three essential skill areas; and
- very good use of ILT to motivate and engage trainees to develop their essential skills.

9.3 The main areas for improvement are the:

- consistent deployment of appropriately qualified staff; and
- lack of opportunity for trainees to complete individual action based activities using appropriate source materials.

Grade Awarded	Total No of Trainees
2	34

PART FOUR

KEY PRIORITIES FOR DEVELOPMENT

Strabane Training Services needs to revise its annual development plan to take account of the following key priorities:

- the development of the provision for careers education, information, advice and guidance; and
- the provision of appropriate work placements for all trainees.

APPENDIX

OVERALL SUMMARY TABLE – 2007-2009

Programme	Started (completed 4 weeks)	Retention Rate %	Success Rate %	Progressed to FE/other training	Progressed to relevant employment
Personal Development/Skills for Your Life	32	88	100	12	0
Skills for Work	11	91	100	0	3
Pre- Apprenticeship	4	100	100	0	1
Overall totals		89	100	12	4

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