

INSPECTION REPORT

3 E's Enterprises Ltd

25 July 2003



ADULT LEARNING
INSPECTORATE

Grading

Inspectors use a seven-point scale to summarise their judgements about the quality of learning sessions. The descriptors for the seven grades are:

- *grade 1 - excellent*
- *grade 2 - very good*
- *grade 3 - good*
- *grade 4 - satisfactory*
- *grade 5 - unsatisfactory*
- *grade 6 - poor*
- *grade 7 - very poor.*

Inspectors use a five-point scale to summarise their judgements about the quality of provision in occupational/curriculum areas and Jobcentre Plus programmes. The same scale is used to describe the quality of leadership and management, which includes quality assurance and equality of opportunity. The descriptors for the five grades are:

- *grade 1 - outstanding*
- *grade 2 - good*
- *grade 3 - satisfactory*
- *grade 4 - unsatisfactory*
- *grade 5 - very weak.*

The two grading scales relate to each other as follows:

SEVEN-POINT SCALE	FIVE-POINT SCALE
grade 1	grade 1
grade 2	
grade 3	grade 2
grade 4	grade 3
grade 5	grade 4
grade 6	grade 5
grade 7	

Adult Learning Inspectorate

The Adult Learning Inspectorate (ALI) was established under the provisions of the *Learning and Skills Act 2000* to bring the inspection of all aspects of adult learning and work-based learning within the remit of a single inspectorate. The ALI is responsible for inspecting a wide range of government-funded learning, including:

- work-based learning for all people over 16
- provision in further education colleges for people aged 19 and over
- **learndirect** provision
- Adult and Community Learning
- training funded by Jobcentre Plus
- education and training in prisons, at the invitation of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Prisons.

Inspections are carried out in accordance with the *Common Inspection Framework* by teams of full-time inspectors and part-time associate inspectors who have knowledge of, and experience in, the work which they inspect. All providers are invited to nominate a senior member of their staff to participate in the inspection as a team member.

Overall judgement

Where the overall judgement is that the provision is adequate, only those aspects of the provision which are less than satisfactory will be reinspected.

Provision will normally be deemed to be inadequate where:

- more than one third of published grades for occupational/curriculum areas, **or**
- leadership and management are judged to be less than satisfactory.

This provision will be subject to a full reinspection.

The final decision as to whether the provision is inadequate rests with the Chief Inspector of Adult Learning. A statement as to whether the provision is adequate or not is included in the summary section of the inspection report.

INSPECTION REPORT

3 E's Enterprises Ltd

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INSPECTION REPORT

DESCRIPTION OF THE PROVIDER

1. 3E's Enterprises Ltd (3E's) is a not-for-profit, wholly owned subsidiary of City Technology College, Kingshurst. Initially formed in 1990 as the commercial wing to the college (CTC Enterprises Ltd) it provided services for local businesses and the community. Renamed 3E's Enterprises Ltd in 1998, it is more focused on providing support for mainstream education.
2. 3E's is supported by a board and a senior management team which consists of a chief executive, associate director, finance director and an operational manager. They are responsible for the management of three teams comprising a regeneration/academy team, a multimedia team and a work-based learning team. There is a day nursery on site.
3. A training and development manager has responsibility for the work-based learning team and all operational aspects of contractual delivery. There are two administrators who are responsible for the recording and collating of quality assurance and management information. The company employs a further six full-time staff and two part-time staff. The three subcontractors who are linked to 3E's provide another nine part-time staff.
4. 3E's funds its training provision through Birmingham and Solihull Learning and Skills Council (LSC) to provide national vocational qualifications (NVQs) and modern apprenticeship training specifically in health, social care and public services and business administration, management and professional. There are 103 learners including advanced modern apprentices, foundation modern apprentices, and those working towards NVQs. 3E's has a subcontract arrangement with a day nursery, covering four sites across the Birmingham area, to train the employees of the company. The Entry to Employment (E2E) pathfinder project started in October 2002. 3E's is delivering the pre-apprenticeship part of this project aimed at those who are not yet ready to enter modern apprenticeship programmes.
5. Learners are recruited from Solihull and Birmingham. Government figures for May 2003 show the proportion of unemployed young people aged between 18 and 24 in these areas is 28.3 per cent, compared with a national average of 26.6 per cent. The LSC's figures show a 6.8 per cent rise in unemployment figures for the past year. Birmingham has a minority ethnic representation of 29.7 per cent and Solihull has 5.4 per cent, compared with 9.1 per cent nationally.
6. The proportion of school leavers in Birmingham and Solihull achieving five or more general certificates of secondary education (GCSEs) at grade C or above is 41.2 per cent in Birmingham and 55.9 per cent in Solihull, compared with a national average of 47.9 per cent.

SCOPE OF PROVISION

Business administration, management & professional

7. Training and assessment is subcontracted to two external providers. There are 17 learners in management and one in administration who are advanced modern apprentices. Learners are visited in the workplace every month for training and assessment and have the option to attend a weekly key skills training session at 3E's training centre.

Health, social care & public services

8. There are 73 learners on early years care and education programmes. Twenty-seven are advanced modern apprentices, 24 are foundation modern apprentices, and 22 learners are on a level 2 NVQ programme. Seven learners who started training on or after 1 February 2003 are working towards the appropriate level of technical qualification. All learners are employed in a range of local nursery settings or receive a training allowance and are placed in appropriate companies. Some learners have all their training in the workplace, while others attend one-day, off-the-job training at the providers' premises.

9. 3E's quality assures the subcontractor's training which has approval for postal certification and has recently been accepted by the awarding body to run technical certificates.

Foundation programmes

10. The provider offers pre-apprenticeship programmes for young people from the north Solihull and Chelmsley Wood area. Thirty-three learners have entered the pilot programme since October 2002. Applicants are referred to the E2E programme by Connexions advisers and after a successful interview and application process, start their 13-week programme. The E2E programme allows individuals to gain confidence, take a basic skills assessment and prepare them for jobsearch. They also attend training in first aid, health and safety, personal development and support.

ABOUT THE INSPECTION

Number of inspectors	5
Number of inspection days	20
Number of learner interviews	51
Number of staff interviews	33
Number of employer interviews	10
Number of subcontractor interviews	3
Number of locations/sites/learning centres visited	20
Number of partner/external agency interviews	7

OVERALL JUDGEMENT

11. The quality of the provision is adequate to meet the reasonable needs of those receiving it. More specifically, 3E's leadership and management are good, as are the arrangements for equal opportunities. The quality assurance arrangements are satisfactory. The quality of work-based learning in management and early years is good and in foundation (E2E) it is satisfactory.

GRADES

grade 1= outstanding, grade 2 = good, grade 3 = satisfactory, grade 4 = unsatisfactory, grade 5 = very weak

Leadership and management	2
Contributory grades:	
Equality of opportunity	2
Quality assurance	3

Business administration, management & professional	2
Contributory grades:	
Work-based learning for young people	2

Health, social care & public services	2
Contributory grades:	
Work-based learning for young people	2

Foundation programmes	3
Contributory grades:	
Life Skills	3

KEY FINDINGS

Achievement and standards

12. **Retention and achievement rates for advanced modern apprentices in business administration, management and professional are very good.** From 1998-2001, the average retention rate was 80 per cent, rising to 100 per cent for starters in 2001. Over three years, achievement rates have increased from 33 per cent to 83 per cent. Retention and achievement rates for NVQ learners and advanced modern apprentices are poor in administration at 47 per cent. 3E's are no longer recruiting onto these programmes. There is a good standard of portfolio presentation which includes a wide range of evidence. Learners achieve a high level of skills and some progress to

management.

13. For early years and childcare advanced modern apprentices, the retention and achievement rates are good. In 2000-01 the retention rate was 88 per cent and the achievement rate was 75 per cent. Retention rates for 2002-03 are 84 per cent. For foundation modern apprentices, the retention rates have improved over the past three years from 52 per cent to 62 per cent. Current retention rates have risen to 81 per cent and learners are making good progress towards completion of the framework. Achievement rates for NVQ programmes has improved over the past three years from 46 per cent to 84 per cent. Seven learners have completed the first external test for the technical certificate with very good results. Learners achieve good standards of work in on- and off-the-job training. Portfolios are well constructed and include a wide range of evidence. Employers and work-placement providers endorse the good standards of work which learners produce. Seventy-five per cent of the sessions observed were good or better.

14. Learners on the E2E foundation programme are making satisfactory progress towards their qualification. Since the programme started, 30 per cent have progressed into further training or employment. Forty-five per cent have completed the programme and are still being monitored, and supported by the provider. In March 2003, 10 learners achieved key skills level 1, application of number and information technology (IT), eight achieved communications level 1, and 2 achieved communications level 2. Retention rates during the pilot programme have been good. Some learners achieve well. For example, one learner who had been a non-attender in secondary school for five years achieved literacy and numeracy at level 1 and IT at level 2. He has progressed to level 2 literacy and numeracy and is following a distance learning IT programme at home. The significant support from the provider is keeping them linked with the provision and is maximising the possibility of progression.

Quality of education and training

Grades awarded to learning sessions

	Grade 1	Grade 2	Grade 3	Grade 4	Grade 5	Grade 6	Grade 7	Total
Business administration, management & professional	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	1
Health, social care & public services	0	0	3	1	0	0	0	4
Foundation programmes	0	0	1	3	2	0	0	6
Total	0	0	4	5	2	0	0	11

15. The business administration, management and professional programme allows the development of good management skills for learners. Many learners have been promoted, and some have full management responsibility for their nursery.

16. Staff are very responsive and flexible to learners' and employers' needs. They actively encourage learners to develop their personal and occupational skills. Good individual learning support promotes confidence in learners.

17. **There is good support to help the early years and childcare learners overcome personal and social difficulties** which may prevent them from being successful learners. Staff provide individual support for learners who have additional learning needs and there is good flexible support in the workplace for off-the-job training. Learners can contact staff and assessors easily and are well supported.

18. **Learners are encouraged to produce a good standard of work** which is endorsed by employers and work-placement providers. They value feedback from assessments and actively take part in planning and negotiating assessments with the assessor and manager. Learners have good research and evaluation skills and can collate and present their portfolios. During the off-the-job training they share good practice from their personal experience in the workplace.

19. **Target-setting is focused solely on the qualification and does not recognise any other need the learner might have.** Learners are not fully aware how they will develop or achieve specific skills. There are no formal training plans.

20. **Staff provide a good standard of personal support which enables learners to attend the E2E programme.** Young mums have been able to participate in the programme as they have received advice and support on funding for childcare and nursery provision. The personal and educational support includes intense individual support in basic skills and key skills and meetings with the personal adviser from Connexions.

21. **Learning takes place in very well-resourced learning areas** which are spacious and have good information and communications technology (ICT) equipment. Good use is made of outside specialist tutors. Learners have access to a wide range of learning resources, on and off site.

22. **Considerable effort has been made by the provider to promote positive working relationships with Connexions and other local groups,** these include youth and community support teams to develop wider access and to share resources.

23. **Some teaching is unsatisfactory** and has little evidence of planning. During these sessions, teaching styles and materials are not meeting the individual needs of the learners.

24. **The E2E programme** is very focused on tasks and **does not take into account the initial assessments** when planning for specific additional learning needs.

25. Learners on the E2E programme spend up to seven hours a day at the centre. There is no room available for breaks and relaxation between learning sessions.

26. All learners have their literacy and numeracy skills assessed as part of an initial assessment. This information is shared with the learner, **but targets to improve are not always followed through on their individual learning plans.** There are two basic skills tutors and a key skills co-ordinator to support learners.

Leadership and management

27. **3E's gives a high priority to staff training.** Members of staff at all levels and stages of their employment are encouraged and supported in their continuing professional development. Training needs are identified at appraisal and are linked to a staff development programme to deal with personal and organisational needs and the needs of learners.

28. **There is effective collaboration with external organisations** to improve lifelong learning. The provider has a range of initiatives, contracts and consortia arrangements which are effective in widening the support systems for its learners.

29. **Data from the management information system is being used with considerable efficiency in monitoring and planning for future developments.** It allows for detailed analysis of provision against local and national targets and also allows staff to monitor attendance.

30. **There is effective management of subcontractors.** All subcontractors work closely with 3E's by attending meetings, staff training and development and appraisal sessions which are organised by the provider.

31. **The organisation positively promotes equal opportunities** throughout the organisation. Learners, staff and employers all have a good understanding of equal opportunities and good practice is established.

32. **The policies and procedures for quality assurance and internal verification are well recorded.** Staff at all levels are involved in the process of reviewing procedures, sharing good practice and making improvements.

33. **In some programme areas the quality of feedback on observed training is weak.** It is descriptive rather than evaluative and is insufficient to improve the effectiveness of teaching. Informal discussions and arrangements are not always recorded.

34. **The design of some of the training programmes does not meet the needs of individual learners.** Planned assessments do not always include day-to-day evidence or consider the learners' ability to move through the programme more quickly. Internal verification is satisfactory. Sampling plans are appropriate and verification is carried out throughout the programmes.

35. **Target-setting is weak at all levels of the organisation.** There are no targets for improving retention and achievement rates. Few targets are set in individual learning plans for progression and achievement. Targets are not challenging some learners.

The following strengths and weaknesses were identified during this inspection:

Leadership and management

Strengths

- good staff development
- good links with external agencies

Weaknesses

- insufficient quality assurance of some training programmes
- inadequate planning of some training programmes
- insufficient formal target-setting

Business administration, management & professional

Strengths

- very good retention and achievement rates for advanced modern apprentices
- good development of management skills by learners
- good individual learning support

Weaknesses

- insufficient planning and target-setting for co-ordinated learning

Health, social care & public services

Strengths

- good retention and achievement rates for advanced modern apprentices
- good support for learners
- good work achieved by learners

Weaknesses

- insufficient learning targets

Foundation programmes

Strengths

- very good support for learners
- very well-resourced learning areas
- good working relationships with Connexions and local youth and community services

Weaknesses

- some unsatisfactory teaching
- inadequate planning and evaluation of taught sessions
- poor use of individual learning plan
- poor facilities for learners outside teaching areas

WHAT LEARNERS LIKE ABOUT 3 E'S ENTERPRISES LTD:

- you can rely on 3E's
- earning and learning
- the very friendly and helpful staff
- being treated as an adult
- a relaxed and very friendly way of learning
- the staff are really supportive
- the way you are treated with respect
- the fact that previous knowledge and experience is taken into account
- there is no pressure but we still have deadlines
- the support for family situations
- the way things have improved considerably
- 'I am more confident now thanks to 3E's'

WHAT LEARNERS THINK 3 E'S ENTERPRISES LTD COULD IMPROVE:

- the induction - a slightly slower pace
- better access to hot meals at lunch time
- more access to training in the evening
- the greenhouse, please cover it up

KEY CHALLENGES FOR 3 E'S ENTERPRISES LTD:

- more effective target-setting for improvement at all levels
- improved monitoring and evaluation of the learners' experience
- improve planning and co-ordination of on- and off-the-job training
- provide rest areas to support learners

DETAILED INSPECTION FINDINGS

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

Grade 2

The following strengths and weaknesses were identified during this inspection:

Strengths

- good staff development
- good links with external agencies
- good use of data and information for development
- effective management of subcontractors
- positive promotion of equal opportunities
- comprehensive and well-recorded quality assurance policies and procedures

Weaknesses

- insufficient quality assurance of some training programmes
- inadequate planning of some training programmes
- insufficient formal target-setting

36. There is particularly good support for staff development. Members of staff at all levels and stages of their employment are encouraged and supported in their continuing professional development. The staff development chart includes a range of training opportunities, such as those relating to occupational competence, teacher training, current government legislation, awareness-raising, local and national initiatives and personal development. Over the past year, all staff have attended a number of training sessions, in particular on the new learning and development standards, the standards for basic skills and the delivery of key skills and technical certificates. Most of the staff have a key skills qualification, some at level 2 and some at level 3. All members of staff have a comprehensive job description with clearly identified roles and responsibilities and specific staff development objectives. New staff attend a thorough post induction in the form of a six-monthly review which assesses how effectively the staff member is settling into their role and what further training and development needs they have. Key staff development objectives are agreed and performance is reviewed in an appraisal review which is carried out each year. Training needs are linked to training plans and meet organisational and personal needs, and the needs of the learners.

37. There is effective collaboration with external organisations to improve lifelong learning. There are strong links with Birmingham and Solihull Connexions. They provide a personal adviser and support and advice on careers, labour market developments, local industries and recruitment. Good use is made of the relationships with 'Enable', an organisation funded by the LSC which provides expert advice on the support of learners. A number of learners have benefited from confidential counselling.

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38. The provider is part of a consortia project and works with a range of partners in Birmingham and Solihull to deal with skill gaps, skill shortages and recruitment difficulties. It aims to create opportunities for people who have previously been excluded from learning opportunities. Links with south Birmingham college to support progression routes to the foundation degree early years programme has already started.

39. Information is shared effectively within the organisation. All staff meet on a day-to-day basis and at formal monthly meetings to discuss emerging problems and to take action. Formal meetings are recorded and actions are identified for named people. Recent appraisal of the review process has led to changes in staff development and training, for example, the upgrading and training of an existing employee to provide another basic skills tutor. The management information system analysis for April 2003 monitors all learners in the database across all programmes. The data are used to analyse learners by programme against government targets. This detailed analysis of current provision is used very effectively for planning and forward financial planning and forecasting future developments. New initiatives, programme development and physical and human resource issues are planned and recorded in business plans and financial records. The data are systematically reviewed by the training and development manager, operations manager and finance manager every month. Weak performance is identified and actions are put into place to deal with problems. Subsequent key tasks are allocated to an appropriate member of staff. The operations manager prepares regular business plans including financial reports for the board. These outline the organisation's progress, risk assessment and development plans. The training and development manager makes presentations to the board on the progress of work-based learning. The board supports the organisation at a strategic level. Communication is effective at all levels. The senior staff are very aware of emerging national agendas and initiatives and strategies to respond are clearly identified in business plans and minutes of meetings. 3E's were one of the first providers locally to begin the new early years apprenticeship in February 2003.

40. All subcontractors attend a monthly meeting as a requirement of the provider. The delivery of training is observed at least once a year and twice a year or more often for new trainers. Subcontractors are required to attend staff development as prescribed by 3E's and this ranges from specific training such as integrating key skills with the early years and education training and key skills portfolio-building, to more generic staff development organised by the provider. All subcontractors are required to ensure that their continuous professional development is up to date and the organisation provides an appraisal review which supports ongoing training and development.

41. The design of some of the training programmes do not meet the needs of individual learners. Planned assessments do not always take place at an appropriate time to make effective use of day-to-day evidence. Some learning programmes do not always take into account the learners' ability to move through the programme more quickly.

42. Off-the-job training is standard and in some instances is not meeting employers' needs. The background knowledge training does not always coincide with the rate and development of practical skills. Some training programmes are not planned between the employer and the provider and some opportunities are not taken for accrediting

achievement.

43. There are few individual targets shown in the individual learning plans, and staff are not given individual targets for learners' achievements. 3E's has access to internal data and statistics which it compares against local and national statistics. However, the information is not used to set targets for improvement. Similarly, learners' information is not being used to set appropriate milestones for progression and achievement. Some of the lesson plans are poor and are focused on tasks rather than on individual's needs. There are some targets, but they are too broad and are not specific enough to meet the learners' needs. Although the individual support for learners enables some to achieve good results, there are inadequate procedures to ensure consistency. There are no targets for improving retention and achievement rates.

Equality of opportunity

Contributory grade 2

44. Learners, staff and employers have a good understanding of equal opportunities. There is a comprehensive policy and manual which is distributed to all employers. Training sessions and information packs include updating materials on the most recent legislation. Learners are encouraged to promote equal opportunities in the workplace through projects and the use of display materials. Checks are carried out to ensure all employers comply with the provider's equal opportunity policy and there is regular monitoring of their own policy.

45. There are multilingual signs to welcome new learners and visitors to the organisation. Wall and classroom displays are also used effectively to promote equal opportunities. Projects which are carried out in the workplace, and induction materials, are used effectively to promote positive attitudes. The equal opportunity policy is clearly written in simple language. It is currently only available in English although there are plans to translate it into several languages to reflect the ethnicity of the community. There is an established culture of equality and respect throughout the organisation. Learners speak positively of their working relationships with staff and value the support they are given.

46. A recent partnership initiative to improve recruitment from under-represented groups is the link with a local school. Learners who were reluctant to travel from Birmingham to Kingshurst, will now be able to work towards qualifications in early years care and education. The new course has been actively promoted through newspapers and training will be offered on the school premises to attract learners from the local community. Nine learners have currently been recruited for the next academic year. The provider has developed positive links with an external agency for support. On the recommendation of the agency, coloured acetates are now used to help learners who have dyslexia and portable dictation machines have been made available. The provider has also purchased computers for learners who have specific learning difficulties.

47. A new software programme has recently been purchased to produce regular data analysis and to target minority ethnic groups and male learners. There has been an increase in the recruitment of learners from minority ethnic groups over the past 12

months. The recruitment of men into the early years care and education has decreased from four to two learners over the same period and insufficient work has been carried out to deal with this imbalance.

Quality assurance

Contributory grade 3

48. The quality assurance manual is comprehensive and is regularly reviewed at team meetings. Key documents are also regularly updated. Staff are actively engaged at all levels in contributing to discussions of improvements to current practice and documents. Good practice is shared on effective procedures. A recently appointed internal verifier who has appropriate qualifications has been helping to train other members of staff and has introduced improvements to the internal verification procedure. After team meetings, evaluation questionnaires were recently revised to encourage a greater response rate from learners. Internal verification feedback forms have also been updated to give assessors more opportunity for feedback.

49. There are comprehensive procedures for internal verification. All assessors and internal verifiers, including subcontractors, meet every month to discuss assessment practice and share good practice. Recent discussions have led to a new development in standardisation procedures. Internal verifiers give detailed feedback to assessors and action points are identified and monitored. Assessment monitoring is clearly recorded. Every unit is sampled and includes the assessment methods. Internal verification actions are followed up and recorded when they have been carried out. Assessors are observed twice a year. Arrangements with the awarding body are satisfactory.

50. Subcontractor monitoring is effective and there are appropriate service level agreements in place. Training sessions by subcontractors are observed twice a year, although the feedback does not identify targets for improvement. Subcontractors are included in 3E's appraisal system and staff training and attend monthly team meetings.

51. Feedback from employers was identified as a weakness in the self-assessment report. Attendance at employers' meetings has been poor, although the provider is actively seeking strategies to deal with this. Telephone interviews have been held with employers, but feedback was limited. After further consultation with employers, the timing of meetings has been revised. However, it is too early to assess whether this will improve the attendance and enable the provider to gather more detailed evaluation. Questionnaires for learners have also been revised recently. The new questionnaire was only implemented shortly before the inspection so it is too early to assess its effectiveness.

52. All staff were involved in the production of the self-assessment report. The staff discussed issues at an awayday and at regular team meetings. Employers were not consulted, but they were updated on issues through newsletters and at the three-monthly meetings.

53. All trainers, including those employed by the subcontractors, are observed in training sessions but the quality of feedback is weak. Trainers on the E2E programme are new

and inexperienced and feedback is not sufficient to improve the effectiveness of their teaching. Feedback is descriptive rather than evaluative. Informal discussions and arrangements are not always recorded. In management there is no systematic arrangement for monitoring on-the-job training. However, the impact only affects some learners.

AREAS OF LEARNING

Business administration, management & professional

Grade 2

Programmes inspected	Number of learners	Contributory grade
Work-based learning for young people	18	2

The following strengths and weaknesses were identified during this inspection:

Strengths

- very good retention and achievement rates for advanced modern apprentices
- good development of management skills by learners
- good individual learning support

Weaknesses

- insufficient planning and target-setting for co-ordinated learning

Achievement and standards

54. Retention and achievement rates for advanced modern apprentices in management are very good. Over the three years from 1998-99 to 2000-01, the average retention rate is 80 per cent and there is currently 100 per cent retention for learners who have started since 2001-02. Achievement rates have significantly increased from 33 per cent in 1998-99 to 83 per cent in 2000-01. However, retention and achievement rates for NVQ learners and advanced modern apprentices in administration are poor. From 1999-2000 to 2001-02, retention and achievement rates for NVQ training were 47 per cent. In the same period, two of the five administration advanced modern apprentices were retained and completed the framework and one learner is still in learning. 3E's are no longer recruiting onto these programmes.

55. Learners develop good occupational skills in the workplace. Learners have good on-the-job training which is appropriate to their work role, but it is not sufficiently planned into their overall learning programmes. Employers provide learners with a wide range of occupational experience. Most employers give learners good opportunities to progress in their job roles and learners are encouraged to broaden their experience by carrying out special projects. Learners make important contributions to the work of their organisations. Many have been promoted and some now have full management responsibility for their nursery. Portfolios are thorough and well organised with clear cross-referencing of evidence. As portfolios are developed there is evidence that learners increasingly assume responsibility for their training. Most learners are making satisfactory progress towards achievement, but for some learners there is insufficient focus on unit achievement, despite considerable evidence in their portfolios.

The following table shows the achievement and retention rates available up to the time of the inspection.

LSC funded work-based learning																
Advanced modern apprenticeships (AMA)																
	2002-03		2001-02		2000-01		1999-2000		1998-99							
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Number of starts	9		10		7		3		3							
Retained*	0		1		5	71	2	67	2	67						
Successfully completed	0		1		5	71	1	33	1	33						
Still in learning	9		9		0	0	0	0	0	0						

*retained learners are those who have stayed in learning for at least the planned duration of their training programmes, or have successfully completed their programme within the time allowed

Quality of education and training

56. Good individual learning support is available to learners. Staff encourage learners to develop their personal and occupational skills and are flexible in arranging workplace visits in response to learners' and employers' needs. Good relationships are established with learners who are confident in approaching them with difficulties. Assessors often provide additional support, guidance and training for learners at their own homes in the evening.

57. Training is satisfactory. The session observed was adequately prepared, but the session plan had insufficient detail and there was little variety in teaching methods. Learners made some confident contributions to group discussions and demonstrated basic understanding of the topics being covered.

58. There are adequate resources to support learning. Learners have access to a range of books and handouts at an appropriate level, which help the learning process. Computer facilities include a good range of software. Laptops are available for assessors to use in learners' workplaces. Staff are occupationally qualified and experienced. All staff participate in appraisals and attend staff development training.

59. Assessment and monitoring are satisfactory. Dates for completion of work and assessments are agreed from one visit to the next. All learners are assessed by observation in the workplace and they are fully recorded and referenced against the NVQ standards. Assessment monitoring is well recorded. Progress reviews are satisfactory. Most employers are involved in the review process and learners are able to reflect on their progress. However, individual learning plans are rarely referred to or updated and the plans are not used effectively to evaluate and monitor overall progress.

60. Arrangements for key skills are satisfactory for most learners. Key skills are now introduced at the start of the training programmes and are an integral part of the NVQ. Learners who started recently attend weekly key skills training sessions. Learners who

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have been on the programme longer, receive key skills support from their assessors during workplace visits. However, for some learners there has been a late start to key skills.

61. Induction is satisfactory. Learners have a good understanding of the requirements of their learning programme and are aware of their rights and responsibilities. They are given an induction handbook for reference. During induction learners are also given appropriate training on equal opportunities and health and safety. Learners have an initial diagnostic assessment to assess their basic skills and key skills requirements. The results are recorded on their individual learning plan. Additional support in basic skills is offered to learners with identified learning needs. Learners who need to take the key skills tests are given individual and group teaching. Extra sessions and opportunities to consolidate learning are organised for the learners.

Leadership and management

62. Training is inadequately planned. Individual learning plans are completed but there are insufficient details of optional units, enhancements or additional support. Plans are not sufficiently matched to the needs and circumstances of the learner. Little information is recorded on how or when training will be carried out.

63. On- and off-the-job training is satisfactory. However, there are no formal, structured training plans and there is little coherent planning of links between the workplace and NVQ or key skills activities. There are no systematic arrangements for monitoring the on-the-job training.

64. Target-setting is weak. Targets do not have clear detailed objectives and do not challenge some learners sufficiently. Targets which are not achieved, are not always followed up and some are carried forward for several months. There are insufficient links with the assessment planning.

65. Equal opportunities and health and safety are routinely and satisfactorily monitored during progress reviews.

66. Internal verification is satisfactory. Sampling plans are appropriate and verification is carried out throughout the training programmes. Satisfactory feedback is given and appropriate actions are identified, but they are not always followed up. Currently verification is carried out independently by both subcontractors, but plans are in place for standardisation activities to be carried out next month.

67. All staff and subcontractors participate in the self-assessment process. However, the assessment report has insufficient detail for this area of learning and does not identify weaker areas or those requiring improvement.

Health, social care & public services**Grade 2**

Programmes inspected	Number of learners	Contributory grade
Work-based learning for young people	73	2

The following strengths and weaknesses were identified during this inspection:

Strengths

- good retention and achievement rates for advanced modern apprentices
- good support for learners
- good work achieved by learners

Weaknesses

- insufficient learning targets

Achievement and standards

68. The retention and achievement rates are good for advanced modern apprentices. Retention rates were 88 per cent and achievement rates were 75 per cent in 2000-01. Retention and achievement rates are satisfactory for foundation modern apprentices. Retention rates have improved over the past three years from 50 per cent to 62 per cent. Achievement rates have been 50 per cent for the past three years. For the current intake of learners, retention rates have risen to 81 per cent and learners are making good progress towards the completion of the framework. In the NVQ programmes, retention rates have declined by 21 per cent to 57 per cent. Achievement rates for learners who complete the programme have improved over the past three years from 46 per cent to 84 per cent.

69. There are currently seven learners who are working towards the technical certificate. Learners have completed their first external test with three distinctions, two merits, and two pass grades. In addition to this, the first assignment has been moderated with six distinction grades and one pass grade.

70. There is satisfactory development of personal skills. Most learners are pleased with their increased confidence, which has improved their ability to talk to parents and colleagues in the workplace. Learners are given realistic and challenging targets and are able to progress from level 2 to level 3 in early years care and education as well as level 3 management programmes. Attendance is effectively monitored and non-attendance is immediately followed up by the training manager/co-ordinator and employer. The appropriate corrective action is taken by 3E's.

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The following tables show the achievement and retention rates available up to the time of the inspection.

LSC funded work-based learning																
Advanced modern apprenticeships (AMA)																
	2002-03		2001-02		2000-01		1999-2000		1998-99							
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Number of starts	13		23		24		1		3							
Retained*	1		3		21		1	100	1	33						
Successfully completed	0		3		18		0	0	1	33						
Still in learning	11		13		3		0	0	0	0						

*retained learners are those who have stayed in learning for at least the planned duration of their training programmes, or have successfully completed their programme within the time allowed

LSC funded work-based learning																
Foundation modern apprenticeships (FMA)																
	2002-03		2001-02		2000-01		1999-2000		1998-99							
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Number of starts	27		13		6		2		2							
Retained*	0		3		3	50	1	50	0	0						
Successfully completed	0		3		3	50	1	50	0	0						
Still in learning	22		2		0	0	0	0	0	0						

*retained learners are those who have stayed in learning for at least the planned duration of their training programmes, or have successfully completed their programme within the time allowed

LSC funded work-based learning																
NVQ Training																
	2002-03		2001-02		2000-01		1999-2000		1998-99							
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Number of starts	21		37		26		13		23							
Retained*	0		19		17	65	6	46	10	43						
Successfully completed	0		16		17	65	5	38	10	43						
Still in learning	12		10		0	0	0	0	0	0						

*retained learners are those who have stayed in learning for at least the planned duration of their training programmes, or have successfully completed their programme within the time allowed

Quality of education and training

71. Learners are given good support in all aspects of their programme. They have an induction in the workplace or with the training provider. Learners are given an initial assessment to determine their suitability for training in the occupational area as well as assessing their basic skills and key skills requirements. Those learners who need to work towards key skills qualifications are given individual and group teaching, either in the workplace or at study workshops. Additional support in basic skills is offered to learners who have additional learning needs and those with additional social needs have pastoral

support. There is frequent contact with tutors/assessors at assessment visits and study days. If a need is identified, the tutors' contact time is increased.

72. Tutors/assessors are approachable and professional. Learners speak of the ease with which they can make contact with the staff at 3E's and assessors by telephone or e-mail. Learners have good individual support for pastoral and training issues. For example, a learner who went on maternity leave was able to continue with her qualification and placement once she could return to work. Another learner was being fast-tracked through her programme to meet the needs of her culture and personal circumstances. Learners who have additional learning needs are given good support by the tutors and assessors. One learner who has additional support now feels that her confidence and self-esteem have improved, she is much more confident in the workplace and takes more responsibility in the nursery. Learners who find it difficult to attend off-the-job training have good support in the workplace, either in small groups or individually.

73. Learners value the feedback from assessment and actively take part in planning and negotiating assessments with the assessor and their mentor or manager in the workplace. Employers and work-placement providers endorse the high standards of work that learners produce. Learners can evaluate their learning and give feedback on their achievements during the reviews. Learners produce good evidence for background knowledge during the off-the-job training. Their note-taking and practical work is good and they use good research skills. They collect evidence from a range of sources such as the Internet and libraries. Learners are motivated and confident to share good practice from their personal experiences in the workplace. Seventy-five per cent of the sessions observed were good or better.

74. There are sufficient staff who are appropriately qualified and experienced. Their knowledge is frequently updated on current practice in early years as well as in assessment and verification. The accommodation for the off-the-job training is satisfactory. However, at one placement the environment is not wholly suitable for training. Learners are sitting on children's chairs and using tables of an inappropriate height. There are adequate current learning materials which include textbooks, journals and other reference materials from recognised early years organisations. Learners have access to some resources for independent study between study workshops. On-the-job training is provided in private nurseries and it is regularly monitored by 3E's. Training that takes place wholly at a subcontractor is effectively monitored by 3E's.

75. Initial assessment is satisfactory. Learners take an assessment in basic skills, key skills and an occupational assessment to determine their suitability for working in early years. Learners who are identified as having additional learning needs are given additional support for basic skills in addition to their off-the-job training. This support is flexible and can take place in the workplace or with the provider. However, the targets are not specific enough and there are insufficient milestones. One learner who needs to improve punctuation has not been given short-term targets to achieve.

76. There is a policy of open access to all early years programmes. Learners' prior experience and learning is taken into account. For example, a learner who had

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completed a substantial amount of the qualification with another provider and with a different awarding body was given additional support to gain a good understanding of 3E's programme. Learners are on appropriate programmes which generally meet their level of ability and aims for the future. 3E's are responsive to employers' and learners' needs through a flexible and frequent approach to assessment. Some learners with the subcontractor are able to fast track through their qualification with support from 3E's. However, there are limited opportunities for learners to take a range of additional qualifications which are relevant to their career.

77. There are insufficient targets for learners on all programmes in early years. Targets that are set are focused solely on qualifications and do not recognise other learning needs. The individual learning plan does not sufficiently break down targets for short and medium term. Learners are not fully aware how they will develop or achieve specific skills. Progress reviews only focus on what the learner has achieved in their qualification, and targets that are set with the learner and the employer are insufficiently specific.

Leadership and management

78. There is satisfactory operational management of the early years programmes. Communication between the learner, tutor/assessor, training manager and employer is generally effective. It is frequent and verbal communication is usually backed up by written confirmation. There is very effective use of information through the management information system. Communication at regular monthly meetings involves staff, subcontractors and work-placement providers and allows good practice to be shared. Staff at all levels have a good understanding of the policies and procedures. There is effective use of learners' appraisals to support staff development and training needs. Assessment and internal verification are regularly monitored for quality assurance. All learners have a good understanding of equal opportunities and this is reflected in the workplace.

Foundation programmes**Grade 3**

Programmes inspected	Number of learners	Contributory grade
Life Skills	22	3

The following strengths and weaknesses were identified during this inspection:

Strengths

- very good support for learners
- very well-resourced learning areas
- good working relationships with Connexions and local youth and community services

Weaknesses

- some unsatisfactory teaching
- inadequate planning and evaluation of taught sessions
- poor use of individual learning plan
- poor facilities for learners outside teaching areas

Achievement and standards

79. Learners have a range of progression opportunities within the three routes of employment, vocational training and further education. Of the 20 learners who started in 2002-03, six have completed their programme and have progressed into one of the three routes. Nine of these learners are still in the monitoring support stage of the programme.

80. Retention rates during the pilot programme have been good. Attendance was good for the first intake, but is inconsistent for the current group. Ten learners achieved key skills at level 1 in application of number and IT, eight achieved communications at level 1 and two achieved communication at level 2.

81. Learners make satisfactory progress in the development of interpersonal and social skills, job seeking skills and key skills at level 1. Provision is also available for progression to key skills level 2.

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The following table shows the achievement and retention rates available up to the time of the inspection.

LSC funded work-based learning																
Life Skills																
	2003-04		2002-03													
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Number of starts	13		20													
Retained*	13		16													
Successfully completed	0		6													
Still in learning	13		9													

*retained learners are those who have stayed in learning for at least the planned duration of their training programmes, or have successfully completed their programme within the time allowed

Quality of education and training

82. Learners have learning programmes which take account of their individual needs. However, attendance during the inspection has been low. The average group size was five, this being 50 per cent of learners at the induction stage of the programme. 3E's staff provide a high standard of personal support which enables individual learners to access the E2E programme and progress on to further study or employment. Learners are encouraged to explore new opportunities and to discuss barriers to employment or training. Two learners have been helped to secure funding for childcare. A learner on the E2E programme who had not attended school or an educational placement for five years from the age of 11 has achieved his primary learning goals even though there were many barriers to learning. The level of personal and educational support provided by 3Es staff included intense basic skills support and interpersonal skills, communication and counselling. The learner achieved key skills at level 1 in communication and application of number, level 2 in IT and is now working towards a distance learning IT course and key skills at level 2. Another learner who had previously started an NVQ at level 2 but had dropped out, was accepted onto the E2E programme. Support and encouragement from staff ensured that the learner's self-confidence and self-esteem were improved. The programme was used to secure a voluntary work placement in a nursery and this enabled the learner to complete her NVQ level 2 in childcare.

83. 3E's provide very good learning resources. Teaching takes place in well-equipped rooms at the Kingshurst training centre. Rooms are spacious, with good ICT equipment. Good use is made of external guest speakers for programmes in health and sex health education. A range of appropriate basic skills teaching materials are available for use in group and individual learning sessions and learners can also use off-site learning resources.

84. There are good working relationships with a range of external agencies including Connexions. Before October, the company had not offered foundation level programmes or Life Skills programmes, but after a review of local needs, 3E's entered

into an agreement to join the Birmingham E2E pilot project. Considerable effort has been made to promote positive working relationships with Connexions and other local groups including youth and community support teams. The development of these effective working relationships has enabled young people who were not receiving education or training to join a supportive organisation. The sharing of resources has improved the learning opportunities and brought in new experiences in the development of ICT and music skills. However, the emphasis on the development of interpersonal skills and Life Skills has led to insufficient focus on the quality assurance of teaching and learning.

85. There is a broad range of marketing and recruitment materials for use by Connexions advisers, youth workers and other groups to raise awareness of the E2E programme. Staff encourage feedback from learners to evaluate the quality of materials on offer. However, there are no publicity materials in other languages or formats for under-represented groups.

86. Learners have a satisfactory induction, which includes key aspects of equal opportunities, health and safety, and organisational policies. The induction for E2E is spread over an eight-week period when learners work on a negotiated programme which is reviewed every four weeks. Appropriate vocational routes are identified, and work placements are sought during this time.

87. One third of the teaching observed was unsatisfactory. The teaching materials and the language are not suitable for most of the group. In some sessions the needs of individual learners are not met. Some tutors do not have any prior knowledge of the learners. Resources are not always used to best effect for all learners.

88. There is inadequate planning and evaluation of teaching sessions. The planning is very task focused, and does not take account of initial assessment. There is no evidence of planning for the specific ability of the group or individuals, and the activities do not effectively engage all learners. Materials are not at a level which is appropriate to most learners. Opportunities are not taken to use questions or illustrations to link the topic to everyday situations. In some sessions there are no effective checks of the learners' understanding at the end of the lesson.

89. The use of individual learning plans is poor. All learners take an initial assessment of their literacy and numeracy skills and the information is recorded and shared with the learner in a review session. However, the information is not adequately shared with tutors and is not used as a basis for lesson plans.

90. There are poor facilities for learners. 3E's do not provide adequate rest and relaxation facilities for learners at the Kingshurst centre. There is nowhere outside of the classroom for learners to make drinks, eat lunch or spend breaks. The provision of vending machines in the entrance to the centre is inadequate and does not meet the needs of individuals on limited budgets. In bad weather, learners have to spend all of their time in the learning area. Learners complained that there is no access to warm food during the day, and that there are no facilities to make a hot drink, or reheat food.

Leadership and management

91. Management of the E2E pilot programme is satisfactory. After a review of local needs and discussion with other agencies, 3E's entered into an agreement to join the Birmingham pathfinder E2E pilot project.

92. 3E's has effective communication with individual advisers and with local youth and community groups.

93. The E2E programme allows access to training for a wider group of potential learners. The sharing of resources has allowed new experiences in the development of ICT and music.