

Rochdale Training Association Limited

Independent learning provider

Inspection dates		26–30 November 2012
Overall effectiveness	This inspection:	Good-2
	Previous inspection:	Satisfactory-3
Outcomes for learners		Good-2
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment		Outstanding-1
Effectiveness of leadership and management		Good-2

Summary of key findings for learners

This provider is good because:

- Learners are achieving well and the success rates of the large majority of groups of learners are high and well above similar groups of learners nationally.
- Good standards of work are attained by learners.
- Learners develop and apply a good range of skills well, including: personal and social skills; English, mathematics and functional skills; employability skills; and practical vocational skills.
- Staff provide outstanding teaching, training and learning.
- Leadership and management are good with some outstanding features.
- Learning programmes in the workplace are managed very effectively.
- Rochdale Training Association Limited (RTA) has a good record of implementing improvements and managing change.
- The response to the needs of the local area is good.
- The management of subcontractors is particularly good.

This is not yet an outstanding provider because:

- The percentage of learners who progress to employment and/or further training from the employability training programme is too low.
- Not all groups of learners achieve at a high rate.
- A few elements of leadership and management require further development.

Full report

What does the provider need to do to improve further?

- Increase the number of learners who progress from the employability training programme into jobs and/or training by: improving the focus on the key learning goal of progression; setting clear targets for progression outcomes and monitoring them in all parts of the programme including subcontractors; further expanding the close connections with private sector businesses to provide bespoke courses where jobs are possible; and developing more preparatory training programmes to support learners to progress into vocational training.
- Ensure all groups of learners achieve at a high rate by: increasing further the number of advanced engineering apprentices who are retained on the programme and who achieve their learning goal; improving further the proportion of learners who achieve within the planned timescale for workplace learners in health and social care; and ensuring improvements are made to the one classroom based programme where, out of a relatively small number of entrants, a high proportion of learners did not achieve.
- Develop the impact of leadership and management by: clearly identifying and giving more prominence to the use of key performance indicators as part of the corporate performance review; extending the collection of data to be able to measure progression and improve it; measuring and summarising the quality of teaching and learning across all programmes and all subcontractors and use the information more strategically to drive improvement, raise standards in all areas of the provision and manage performance.

Inspection judgements

Outcomes for learners	Good
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- Learners and groups of learners are achieving well. A large majority of learners achieve their learning goals overall. Success rates for apprentices over the past four years have been consistently high and well above those for similar groups of learners nationally.
- Success rates for apprentices in early years and in administration, which is the largest programme offered, are very high, well above those of similar groups of apprentices nationally. In some cases all learners on the programme achieve and in one programme this has been the case for four years running.
- The success rates for engineering advanced apprentices, which is a relatively small part of the provision, are lower than similar groups nationally. Retention of advanced apprentices was low but has improved significantly.
- A small minority of apprentices in 2011/12 did not complete within planned timescales. Apprentices on programme in the current year are progressing at a satisfactory or better rate.
- The number of workplace learners who achieve their learning goals within planned timescales is very high apart from in one subject area with a relatively small proportion of the learners. RTA changed how this programme operates but it is too early to see any improvement in achievements within planned timescales.
- The number of employability learners who achieved accredited qualifications overall was high in 2011/12 apart from a small group of learners in one subject area. RTA identified this underperformance and appropriate actions were taken with the subcontracted provider.
- No other significant trends are apparent in the rates of achievement of different groups apart from those noted above where actions have been put in place and in most cases the achievement gap is narrowing.
- Learners acquire and apply a wide range of vocational skills. They also gain skills such as independent learning, personal and social skills, team working, English, mathematics and

practical skills. They become confident and self-assured in their work activities, communicate effectively and develop good employability skills.

- Learners enjoy their training and learning very much and are highly motivated and enthusiastic. They develop good levels of self-confidence and improve their workplace skills. Learners demonstrate high standards in the skills they use at work.
- Administration apprentices skilfully generate and use spread sheets with extended use of formulae, filtering, sorting and creating graphs to support colleagues and team leaders in the workplace. In early years programmes, learners gain very good communication and interpersonal skills which they use to very good effect to discuss complex situations or issues with service users and to manage the behaviour of young children.
- The proportion of learners who progress from apprenticeship programmes and workplace learning programmes onto further training, education or higher responsibilities at work is satisfactory overall and good in parts of the apprenticeship programme.
- Career progression is good in administration programmes with a significant minority of learners gaining promotion to positions of responsibility. The majority of apprentices progress from intermediate to the advanced apprenticeship programme. Others progress to higher-level qualifications and further training. Progression in engineering and early years is also good.
- Progression from the employability training programme to further training or jobs was low in 2011/12. This has improved in the first quarter of 2011/12 overall but not yet in all parts of the programme.

The quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Outstanding

- Teaching, training, learning and assessment are outstanding and this is reflected in the high, and in some cases very high, achievements for apprentices and learners. Learners' experience of this high standard of training contributes significantly to their enjoyment of learning and to the good progress they make. In the well-planned and very effective training sessions learners benefit from a wide range of stimulating activities that engage their interest, motivate them, developing their confidence and skills and enabling them to learn and make progress.
- Most of the on- and off-the-job training sessions observed were judged good or outstanding. Training and coaching in the workplace for learners is of a consistently high standard. Learning at work is well-structured and planned to support progress and achievement. Learners engage in demanding activities, develop understanding and learn skills very effectively through completing challenging tasks to a high standard, often under pressure in busy environments. Learners gain confidence through the supportive and well organised approach taken by staff to their development and learning.
- The experienced training staff are well qualified and skilful in enriching their teaching and they use their vocational knowledge very well to help explain difficult concepts in an imaginative and relevant way. Staff have high expectations of learners and use creative approaches to make learning interesting and stimulating. Learners respond well and participate actively. Learners are challenged to develop good learning and thinking skills, working independently on projects and assignments. Staff operate very effectively alongside skilled and experienced employees in the workplace to maximise the learning for their learners.
- Learners complete a detailed initial assessment which is used very effectively by RTA staff. If required they undertake further diagnostic testing. The identification of their individual starting points is thorough and learners' individual needs are carefully matched to their training programmes. Additional support is available when required and is effective.
- Assessment is well-planned, constructive and thorough. Feedback is accurate and allows individuals to reflect on where they need to improve performance. Feedback to learners is good and outstanding for early years apprentices. Learners have a clear view of how to improve and progress in their programmes of learning. Reviews of learners' progress are good. A very large

majority of employers are fully involved in the reviews and provide comments and assessment of progress.

- The teaching of English and mathematics is integrated particularly well into vocational training. It clearly builds on previous work which supports and develops understanding. In the training centre, English, mathematics and information and communication technology teaching and learning is effective. In a small minority of cases learners would benefit from better marking of grammatical and spelling errors in their assignments and portfolios.
- Information, advice and guidance supports learning very effectively. All learners receive regular sessions to guide and assist them in progressing and considering their options. Staff display a good approach to providing advice and guidance. Early years learners are ambitious in their career aims and use formal career plans effectively to plan for their future development.
- Learners' knowledge and understanding of equality and diversity is generally good. It is reinforced regularly and thoroughly. Behaviour in training sessions and at work demonstrates their understanding. Staff are confident in their approach to equality and diversity topics and skilfully embed them into learning through induction, use of good resources and through other opportunities in the training programme.

Early years and playwork Apprenticeships

Outstanding

- Teaching, learning and assessment are outstanding, which is reflected in the very high proportion of learners who achieve their qualifications. Learners make rapid and in some cases very good progress towards achieving their qualifications.
- Teachers plan theory learning very well and use high-quality learning resources that develop learners' skills and confidence in a wide range of situations. Learners very quickly acquire the required knowledge about subjects, including safeguarding and maintaining clients' dignity, and produce very high standards of written work.
- Training staff work very effectively with employers to provide highly effective learning at work, carefully planning demonstrations, practice activities and tuition to increase learners' practical skills. Through these and other learning activities learners become highly skilful in recognising the needs of service users and carefully considering suitable solutions, often working under pressure.
- All learners are highly motivated and interested in their learning. Extremely high levels of cooperation and interaction with assessors and workplace supervisors lead to enhanced confidence and skills development.
- Initial assessment is very thorough and used well by assessors to plan individual programmes and, when required, to plan additional learning support. Programmes are regularly reviewed with individual learners and their supervisors at work. Learners are very clear about what is required of them and understand their objectives for each stage of the programme.
- Early years assessors carefully plan learners' assessments which are thorough and very well organised. They adapt their assessment visits flexibly around learners' shift patterns and work priorities. Assessors use a very wide range of assessment methods and enable learners to maximise their potential. Learners receive motivating and very constructive feedback from assessors that clearly highlights how they can improve their work.
- Challenging learning activities are set that develop learners' knowledge well and encourage them to reflect on their personal and professional development. Assessors are highly skilled in the way they ask questions, listen and reinforce learning. They highlight the learning points for learners very well by the way they use their high levels of experience, skill and knowledge of working with children.
- Detailed action plans encourage learners to become more independent in their learning. Learners engage effectively in active and reflective learning techniques which promote

ownership of their learning. They use online learning, websites or written texts very effectively to extend their learning, enrich it and take them beyond the requirements of the qualification.

- Particularly well thought through and well planned projects use the practical experiences of the workplace to set stretching tasks. These are reflected on and reviewed very well, and learners draw together their experiences and enhance their understanding and skills in working with children, parents and colleagues in demanding early years environments.
- Learners benefit from the extremely knowledgeable assessors who are very up-to-date in their subject area. They make use of their extensive vocational knowledge and experience to support learners through their programme and provide relevant advice about future career and training opportunities. All learners receive very good initial guidance about their programme which prepares them well for learning and assessment.
- Assessors are well trained in safeguarding and equality and diversity. They teach and reinforce the subjects very well with learners. Learners regularly discuss equality and diversity topics with their assessors and this increases their high levels of awareness of how to deal with potential issues at work. Safeguarding is fully integrated into all aspects of learning and assessment activities and learners have a very good understanding which they demonstrate in their work and behaviour.

**Engineering
Apprenticeships
Other work based learning**

Good

- Teaching, learning and assessment are good and are reflected in the overall achievement of workplace learners and intermediate apprentices. However, the achievement of advanced apprentices is low due to poor retention between 2008 and 2010, although this has now been resolved through improvements to selection, initial assessment and induction practices.
- Training sessions are well planned and managed; on-the-job learning is well organised and enriches the learner's experience. Learners benefit from good resources and a range of tasks and activities which stimulate their interest. Staff are knowledgeable and experienced. They check constantly on learners' progress throughout the sessions and when they visit the workplace. They engage learners very well and use good question and answer techniques.
- Staff have high expectations and learners respond well by producing high-quality products and achieving demanding tasks in the workplace. Learners' work is of a good and in some cases very good standard. Many apprentices respond well to working independently with appropriate supervision and learn problem-solving skills and how to take responsibility. For example, one young apprentice, at a relatively early stage in his programme, was working to demanding industrial standards, using complex measuring equipment and was able to confidently inspect a manufactured machine shaft and identify several faults against the dimensions in the specification.
- Apprentices make good progress, and much of their on-the-job training is challenging. Learners are constantly improving their workplace and personal skills as well as extending their knowledge and understanding of engineering. In off-the-job training practical workshop sessions, learners demonstrate high standards of work. They design and make useful products, demonstrating their imagination, planning and thinking skills as well as engineering skills and their knowledge of manufacturing techniques.
- RTA engages very well with employers. Employers take an active role in the review process and have a good understanding of the apprentice's progress and what is required to move forward. Initial assessment is effective and, where required, clearly identifies learners who may require additional learning support, which is then provided effectively.
- Assessment practices are good. Records contain a wide range of evidence in a variety of forms. Assessment in the workplace is well-planned, and organised, thorough, carefully recorded and

implemented very well by qualified and very experienced RTA staff. The verbal and written feedback given to learners is effective, reinforcing achievements well and highlighting areas for development and improvement. However, in a minority of portfolios, the written feedback is not sufficiently detailed to help apprentices improve the quality of their work.

- The development of apprentices' English and mathematical skills is good and the skills are used well in engineering environments where learners are constantly reading, writing and using mathematics when measuring, adjusting machines and writing reports or assignments. Trainers provide very effective support for learners where required.
- Information, advice and guidance effectively meet the needs of learners. Pre-enrolment and induction material gives accurate information and advice on courses and course content. RTA staff discuss topics such as employment prospects and college and university courses with learners during their programmes.
- Apprentices and workplace learners have a satisfactory understanding and awareness of equality and diversity which are covered well in induction and off-the-job training, and are reinforced in most of the media and resources RTA provides for learners. However, records of reviews do not indicate sufficiently well the learners' understanding of equality and diversity topics.

Employability Classroom learning

Good

- Good classroom learning is reflected in the high proportion of learners on employability courses who achieve qualifications. However, progress into employment or further training was low in 2011/12, although it is showing significant improvement for current learners and courses now have a clearer focus on progression.
- Teaching, learning and assessment are good. Tutors are well qualified and plan learning sessions effectively. Learners benefit from this approach when planning their assessment activities and developing their employability skills. Learners are clear about what is expected of them and this motivates them and they make good progress.
- The schemes of work and skilfully planned learning sessions meet learners' individual needs and help them to develop a wide range of work-related skills relevant to entering employment such as accessing job information, preparing CVs and interview techniques.
- Most classroom sessions include a range of interactive activities which encourage learners to work both independently and collaboratively, developing interpersonal skills, team working and confidence. Tutors make good use of resources to support learners' development; however, in a small minority of sessions, tutors rely too heavily on whole-group activities and use a limited range of learning techniques.
- Learners have individual objectives based on sound initial assessment which are regularly reviewed and this provides learners with constructive feedback. Learners appreciate the good support they receive from highly motivated tutors which enables them to focus on their learning and develop their confidence. The standard of learners' work is high in relation to their starting points. They demonstrate good skills in sessions through role play and project work.
- Learners enjoy the challenge of learning new skills and developing their knowledge and understanding of work roles and requirements for entry to work. Those on vocational routes develop skills in social care, childcare and construction. Many gain a greater sense of direction and learn to take responsibility for their own learning.
- Reviews are regular and now have an improved focus on the steps required to progress after the current course. The motivational feedback received by learners encourages them to improve their performance. Highly effective individual coaching supports the development of their social and employability skills.
- Tutors give well-structured written and verbal feedback providing learners with detailed and clear guidance that assists them to progress. Learners receive individual support with numeracy,

spelling and grammar when completing activities. Learners with more specific needs are referred to local specialist providers for English and mathematics support.

- Advice, guidance and support are good. RTA works with local employers to identify good opportunities and provide learners with focused training that enables them to secure sustained employment. Advice from specialist providers supports learners with progression to further training.
- RTA's effective partnership working with local community groups widens participation to learning for minority and disadvantaged groups. The use of local community centres as learning venues opens access further and supports learners with their employment aims.
- RTA covers equality and diversity well at induction and then promotes and reinforces them effectively and integrates them into learning programmes. Staff are good role models and learners' behaviour and interaction demonstrate good awareness and understanding of respecting and valuing difference. Teaching and learning promote understanding of equality and diversity topics well and learners' understanding is good.

Administration

Apprenticeships

Other work based learning

Outstanding

- The outstanding quality of teaching, learning and assessment is reflected in the very high outcomes achieved by learners. Success rates for apprentices and workplace learners are outstanding.
- Assessors are very skilful, enthusiastic and knowledgeable and they support learners extremely well throughout their learning programme. Some learners attend RTA's workshops once a week, developing a depth of knowledge and understanding of topics for the technical certificate as well as a broader understanding of the subject and skills for the workplace.
- RTA holds individual coaching and training sessions near to the job and these take place at work regularly for learners who do not attend off-the-job sessions at RTA. These sessions are organised and planned particularly effectively. They clearly link in to the scheme of work and enable strong links to be made between on- and off-the-job training. Learners enjoy them and learn very effectively from them. For example, apprentices take part in very effective coaching sessions after which they are able to use and maintain databases, record customer information and produce reports to inform business planning to support managers in the workplace.
- Assessors use good-quality resources very well to support learning at work and in off-the-job training. RTA's training facilities are of a high standard. Accommodation, facilities at the training centre and at work all provide good learning environments which reinforce models for professional business operations and high standards.
- Assessors set learners clear objectives and action plans which are used very effectively to plan and review progress. Initial assessments and further diagnostic tests ensure learners are on the appropriate course and level of functional skills to suit their needs. Learners progress to higher-level functional skills, which motivates them further.
- Assessments are carried out very well, are thoroughly planned and recorded effectively. Employers participate in setting objectives, planning tasks, contributing to assessment and monitoring learners' progress.
- Employer engagement is very good and RTA meets the needs of the learners' and employers' particularly effectively. Additional training, above that required to meet the qualification standards, is provided by RTA when required to meet the needs of the business and learner. Employers value the benefits of the training provided by RTA. For example, one of the larger employers has identified a significant business benefit in the reduction in staff turnover since the implementation of the apprenticeship programme.

- Learners receive very good information and guidance at induction and during progress reviews to enable them to make informed choices about further study and career progression. Learners are encouraged to complete further qualifications related to their career development and the business needs. Learners value the support provided which motivates them to achieve and progress.
- RTA promotes and reinforces equality and diversity effectively. Learners have a good understanding of topics such as discrimination, equality of opportunities, sexism and other issues. Staff are confident in their approach to these topics and skilfully incorporate them into learning through induction, use of good resources and through other opportunities in the training programme and experience at work.
- Learner's awareness of safeguarding is effectively supported by thorough and well planned induction sessions and materials. This is further reinforced in training sessions and at reviews. Learners have a good understanding of the threats to them of harassment, bullying and other risks at work. They know who to approach and what to do if they need to discuss any concerns.

The effectiveness of leadership and management

Good

- RTA has considerably expanded the size and the range of training programmes on offer since the last inspection following the successful delivery of its Train to Gain contract. Changes have been managed well. The provider is highly effective at meeting employers' needs and providing learners with very good quality learning experiences leading to high success rates.
- RTA has a good track record of implementing improvements over the past three years. Leaders and managers have achieved high standards in apprenticeship and workplace learning programmes and in classroom-based employability training.
- The strategy to provide courses targeting employability and leading to further training and employment opportunities for unemployed learners in response to the needs of the local community is beginning to work. However, in employability training overall in 2011/12, the first year RTA provided this programme, the progression rate to employment or further training was low. Improvements have been made to the programme that are beginning to show positive results.
- The board of voluntary trustees and co-opted members take an active part in steering the corporate direction, overseeing performance, providing secure financial management and promoting improvement. Monthly reports are produced by senior managers and the board meets quarterly to review strategy and performance. This process is effective overall and senior managers are appropriately challenged.
- The use of management information and data for planning and decision making is generally good. However, a few elements require improvement, such as the explicit use of key performance indicators and also the way that data to support the measurement of progression across all programmes is collected and used. A data collection process for capturing progression was recently introduced for the employability programme including sub-contractors.
- Performance-management systems are robust and staff and subcontractors have a clear understanding of key business objectives and how their targets contribute to the overall performance and strategic direction.
- Quality assurance arrangements are comprehensive and well established and include an effective system for the observation and improvement of teaching and learning. The three-year development plan is monitored rigorously through extensive quality improvement planning. Self-assessment is rigorous and includes the views of staff, learners and employers to plan and implement improvements. The self-assessment report is critical and broadly accurate in what it covers.

- RTA works extremely effectively with a wide range of local, regional and national external agencies and organisations to ensure it is responsive to local and national priorities. It is proactively involved in regional and national provider groups that provide a range of activities including the sharing of good practice, mentoring and peer reviews.
- RTA is committed to supporting the local community and is actively widening participation through a number of projects particularly through its subcontracting to a community based provider.
- Learning programmes meet the needs and interests of learners and employers particularly well. Programmes are flexible and are adapted effectively to accommodate individual learners' needs and are often tailored to meet a range of business needs.
- RTA provides good resources to support its training programmes and invests surpluses in improving them. Training facilities are of a good standard at the RTA centre and at the subcontractors. In prioritising resource allocation RTA recognises the need to make progress with introducing information and communication technology and web-based learning resources particularly to support learners in the workplace. Work is in progress to achieve this.
- RTA promotes equality and diversity effectively. Learners are generally well aware of how to deal with bullying, harassment and discrimination and know who they can contact to report any issues. Implementation of policies and procedures are monitored effectively. RTA's and its subcontractors' training arrangements for equality and diversity and safeguarding are effective and particularly well monitored.
- A comprehensive action plan ensures that RTA continues to progress in its overall approach to the promotion of equality and diversity. Data analysis to identify any particular gaps in achievement between different groups is generally effective although in the last year the difference in achievements between males and females overall was not identified. However, it is too early to say if this is a significant trend. The analysis of progress and achievements of learners with learning difficulties and disabilities requires attention.
- Learners feel safe. Learners adopt safe working practices. The provider meets its statutory requirements for safeguarding learners. Learners have a good awareness of what to do if they have any concerns and safeguarding is given appropriate prominence in all that RTA does.

Record of Main Findings (RMF)

Rochdale Training Association Limited				
Inspection grades are based on a provider's performance: 1: Outstanding 2: Good 3: Requires improvement 4: Inadequate	Overall	Apprenticeships	Other work-based learning	Employability
Overall effectiveness	2	2	2	2
Outcomes for learners	2	2	2	2
The quality of teaching, learning and assessment	1	1	1	1
The effectiveness of leadership and management	2	2	2	2

Subject areas graded for the quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Grade
Early years and playwork	1
Engineering	2
Employability training	2
Administration	1

Provider details

Rochdale Training Association Limited	
Type of provider	Independent learning provider
Age range of learners	16+
Approximate number of all learners over the previous full contract year	Full-time: 1,540
	Part-time: 466

Principal/CEO	Jill Nagy
Date of previous inspection	March 2009
Website address	rochdaletraining.co.uk

Provider information at the time of the inspection

[illegible]

Additional socio-economic information

Rochdale is situated 10 miles to the north-east of Manchester. The borough is the tenth most deprived nationally. The number of young people who are not in education, employment or training is higher than regional and national levels. The proportion of school leavers in Rochdale achieving five A* to C grades at GCSE, including English and mathematics, is 54%.

RTA is a training provider with charitable status formed originally in 1966 to provide training services to local member companies mainly involved in manufacturing. The company holds a contract with the Skills Funding Agency and now provides apprenticeships and workplace learning for 170 companies including 12 member companies throughout Lancashire and Greater Manchester. Its main training areas are engineering and administration with some other areas sub-contracted. Training is provided at the main centre in Rochdale, at companies' premises and other locations throughout the local area and region.

Information about this inspection

Lead inspector

Derrick Spragg HMI

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

What inspection judgements mean

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

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

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

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