

The Motor Insurance Repair Research Centre (Thatcham)

Independent learning provider

Inspection dates		18–21 March 2013
Overall effectiveness	This inspection:	Good-2
	Previous inspection:	Good-2
Outcomes for learners		Outstanding-1
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment		Good-2
Effectiveness of leadership and management		Good-2

Summary of key findings for learners

This provider is good because:

- For the last two years all advanced apprentices, and most intermediate apprentices, have successfully completed their motor vehicle programmes in panel, paint or mechanical, electrical and trim at the Thatcham Automotive Academy.
- Apprentices develop excellent skills in repairing and refinishing damaged motor vehicles and gain additional qualifications that are highly valued by their employers.
- The resources at Thatcham are outstanding. The learning environment is exemplary, instructors are experienced, knowledgeable and enthusiastic, the training materials are high quality and the apprentices work on a wide range of modern motor vehicles.
- Teaching and learning in all phases of the programme are good and assessments in the workplace are regular and provide learners with effective feedback on how to improve.
- Apprentices are particularly well supported and looked after while staying away from home to attend their blocks of training at Thatcham.
- Managers and staff at Thatcham have high expectations and encourage apprentices to achieve the same high standards as learners on the industry's technical accreditation courses.

This is not yet an outstanding provider because:

- The training at Thatcham and from mentors in the workplace is not well coordinated or planned to complement each other.
- Training does not always ensure apprentices develop their personal, social and employability skills and, in particular, their literacy skills.
- Managers have not conducted observations of instructors and assessors frequently enough to identify areas where they can further develop their teaching strategies and coaching techniques.

Full report

What does the provider need to do to improve further?

- Conduct more regular observations to identify how instructors and assessors can improve their teaching strategies and coaching skills to improve overall teaching, learning and assessment.
- Enhance the workplace mentoring system for 16- to 18-year-olds to improve success rates for this group.
- Ensure instructors and assessors correct learners' spelling and grammar to help develop their literacy skills.
- Ensure equality and diversity are delivered in an appropriately contextualised manner in training sessions and progress reviews.
- Develop better links between learning in the workplace and the block release programmes at Thatcham by discussing with employers what the apprentices will learn and when to ensure the training complements their plans for the apprentices.
- Revise the self-assessment process and report to reflect better the organisation's strengths and areas for development.

Inspection judgements

Outcomes for learners	Outstanding
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- Success rates on the advanced apprenticeship programme are outstanding, with all apprentices completing their qualifications for the last two years. The success rates for intermediate apprenticeships improved in 2011/12 and are above the national averages for vehicle body and paint operations. The vast majority of apprentices complete within the expected timescale.
- The small number of female apprentices on vehicle body and paint programmes all completed and the vast majority of apprentices from minority ethnic groups also succeed. Apprentices aged 16- to 18-years-old had a lower success rate in 2010/11, and in the current year, due to leaving their employment for a variety of reasons.
- Apprentices develop excellent skills and knowledge on how to remove parts, repair and refinish damaged vehicles. They learn specialist techniques in refurbishing motor vehicle panels, paint techniques or repairing mechanical, electrical and trim parts. They work confidently on a wide range of vehicles, including high value brands.
- Apprentices develop good employability skills in the workplace. Apprentices' mathematical skills improve as part of their training programmes. However, instructors do not consistently ensure apprentices improve their personal, social and literacy skills during their blocks of training at the Thatcham Automotive Academy.
- Health, safety and welfare have a very high priority and apprentices understand the potential hazards of working in the automotive industry. Apprentices working with hazardous substances demonstrate a good understanding of the associated legislation on the control of substances hazardous to health. Apprentices also learn how to work safely on electric vehicles and hybrid cars.
- Apprentices gain additional qualifications and skills which are highly valued by employers, including a course on how and when to make cost-effective repairs to damaged vehicles rather than replacing damaged parts.
- The majority of apprentices who complete their intermediate apprenticeship progress successfully to an advanced apprenticeship. Although there are currently few higher-level qualifications available in vehicle body and paint sector, Thatcham is working with the awarding body to develop more progression routes and improve the professional status of people in the industry.

- Thatcham celebrates and recognises apprentices' skills and achievements through an annual award ceremony. In the last few years several talented apprentices have been successful in national and international skills competitions.

The quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Good

- Teaching, learning and assessment are good and result in outstanding outcomes for apprentices. Instructors are enthusiastic and use their extensive industry experience and knowledge well. Lessons are well planned and instructors carefully check learning through open and directed questions and group work to promote peer learning.
- The resources at Thatcham are outstanding and instructors use them effectively to engage and motivate apprentices and promote good learning. The learning environment, catering and relaxation spaces are comfortable and well equipped. There are a wide range of interactive learning technologies, modern motor vehicles and industry-standard body and paint equipment which instructors use effectively in theory and practical sessions.
- Instructors and assessors do not routinely use the outcomes from initial assessment to inform and plan learning and assessment strategies. The majority of apprentices favour visual and practical learning, but many lessons are not sufficiently varied and reliant upon instructor exposition, with apprentices in passive learning modes for long periods. Planning of additional activities for more able apprentices is underdeveloped.
- Apprentices are given timely and detailed feedback on assessments and coursework which clearly tells them how well they are doing and what they need to do to improve further. Apprentices are competent at using sophisticated equipment on routine and complex repair and refinishing for a wide range of vehicles and paint finishes. Apprentices work to high standards and take pride in the quality of their work.
- Apprentices benefit from excellent links with employers and the automotive industry. Employers promote and support learning well. The provider hosts events to engage with new apprentices, their employers, parents and guardians. These events promote an increased awareness and understanding of the apprenticeship programmes. Many school pupils are introduced to the automotive industry through innovative events supported by employers.
- The promotion and development of learners' employability skills during training sessions and reviews in the workplace are underdeveloped. Few targets are set to improve personal and employability skills, for example timekeeping, reliability and team working. Instructors develop apprentices' mathematics skills in a contextualised manner in learning activities such as working out paint mix ratios. Apprentices' written work is generally thorough and demonstrates their technical understanding. However, instructors do not correct grammar and spelling errors and there is little active promotion to improve apprentices' use of English.
- Reviews in the workplace are frequent and timely. Target setting is effective in assuring that apprentices complete within their agreed timescales. Some employers take an active role in the review, setting and implementation of learning and assessment opportunities. However, there is a lack of correlation between the training in the workplace and training at Thatcham, and some opportunities for early progress and assessment are missed.
- Apprentices value both the formal and informal support provided. Employers give good support to the apprentices. Very highly skilled and experienced practitioners in the workplace act as mentors, providing frequent and invaluable training and advice. The welfare team at Thatcham provides good support, advice and guidance to apprentices while they are living away from home.
- Apprentices have a basic understanding of equality and diversity. However, instructors and assessors do not make use of naturally occurring opportunities to challenge apprentices about prejudice and stereotyping. Opportunities to incorporate broader diversity themes into lessons and workshop sessions are missed. Customer service apprentices do not always consider the diverse client group they may have to work with.

The effectiveness of leadership and management

Good

- Leaders and managers at Thatcham demonstrate a strong commitment to ensuring insurance companies and the motor industry have young people trained, with the high-level skills necessary to repair increasingly complex and technologically advanced motor vehicles. Managers and staff in the apprenticeship training centre expect apprentices to achieve the same high standards as learners on the commercial automotive technical courses.
- Instructors and assessors complete a good range of continuing professional development activities to maintain their excellent technical and industrial knowledge and skills. Staff personal performance plans focus on general competencies and business-related objectives. There is insufficient focus on developing instructors' and assessors' teaching skills and strategies to improve their ability to train, assess and support apprentices who are of varying levels of ability.
- Quality assurance processes are thorough and focus strongly on compliance to achieving the specified standards. Managers did not carry out observations of teaching and learning frequently enough in the last year. The observation process does not identify sufficiently well the areas that instructors and assessors need to develop to continue to improve the quality of the provision.
- Managers understand the organisation's strengths and areas for development well through effective business planning and thorough and detailed research into the industry, as well as employers' and apprentices' perceptions of the programmes. However, the self-assessment report is too descriptive and does not effectively summarise the current situation. The quality improvement plan provides a satisfactory record of all improvements planned and completed.
- Thatcham responds very well to the needs of insurance companies and employers in the crash repair sector. In conjunction with the Institute of Automotive Engineering Assessors, Thatcham has developed and introduced an apprenticeship for vehicle damage assessors. The provider is also now delivering a customer service apprenticeship for apprentices who are key points of contact for customers at automotive repair and refinishing establishments. The detailed delivery plans for these new programmes are still in development.
- Thatcham actively encourages apprentices from under-represented groups to join the apprenticeship programmes, although the numbers remain small. Staff take appropriate action to address issues such as bullying and harassment. However, the approaches tend to be reactive in ensuring apprentices show consistent levels of respect for others.
- Thatcham meets its statutory requirements for the safeguarding of apprentices. Health and safety have a high priority in all training activities. An experienced and well-trained coordinator provides learners with guidance and support when they are staying away from home during the block release training. Hotels are carefully selected and vetted to ensure apprentices are safe and contact is maintained with parents and employers where appropriate.

Record of Main Findings (RMF)

The Motor Insurance Repair Research Centre (Thatcham)

<p>Inspection grades are based on a provider's performance:</p> <p>1: Outstanding 2: Good 3: Requires improvement 4: Inadequate</p>	Overall	Apprenticeships
Overall effectiveness	2	2
Outcomes for learners	1	1
The quality of teaching, learning and assessment	2	2
The effectiveness of leadership and management	2	2

Subject areas graded for the quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Grade
Motor Vehicle	2

Provider details

The Motor Insurance Repair Research Centre (Thattham)	
Type of provider	Independent learning provider
Age range of learners	16+
Approximate number of all learners over the previous full contract year	Full-time: 102
	Part-time:
CEO	Peter Shaw
Date of previous inspection	April 2008
Website address	www.thattham.org.uk

Provider information at the time of the inspection								
Main course or learning programme level	Level 1 or below		Level 2		Level 3		Level 4 and above	
	16-18	19+	16-18	19+	16-18	19+	16-18	19+
Total number of learners (excluding apprenticeships)								
Full-time	3	1						
Part-time								
Number of apprentices by Apprenticeship level and age	Intermediate		Advanced		Higher			
	16-18	19+	16-18	19+	16-18	19+		
	29	21	10	21				
Number of learners aged 14-16	N/A							
Number of community learners	N/A							
Number of employability learners	N/A							
Funding received from	Skills Funding Agency (SFA)							
At the time of inspection the provider contracts with the following main subcontractors:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ N/A 							

Additional socio-economic information

The Motor Insurance Repair Research Centre, known as Thatcham, is a unique not-for-profit automotive organisation and is a company limited by guarantee. Established in 1969, it employs 180 staff and is jointly owned by members of the Association of British Insurers and Lloyd Motor Underwriters Association. The company conducts research into crash testing/reparability and other activities. The Thatcham Automotive Academy provides commercial training and accreditation courses for the industry. One designated section of the academy provides two-week blocks of training for apprentices employed by motor vehicle bodyshops throughout England. Apprentices are visited, assessed and reviewed in their workplaces.

Information about this inspection

Lead inspector

Joy Montgomery HMI

One of Her Majesty's Inspectors (HMI) and two additional inspectors, assisted by the Academy Development Manager 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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