

INSPECTION REPORT

Gordon Franks Training

11 November 2005



ADULT LEARNING
INSPECTORATE

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 aged over 16
- provision in further education colleges for people aged 19 and over
- **learnndirect** 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.

Pre-inspection analysis

The resources allocated to a cycle 2 inspection are primarily determined by the findings from the previous inspection. Account is also taken of information about achievement and retention obtained from the funding body, and any significant changes in the size or scope of the provision.

Where a provider has received good grades in cycle 1, the cycle 2 inspection is relatively light. If the provider offers a number of areas of learning, a restricted sample is inspected.

Where a provider has received satisfactory grades in cycle 1, the cycle 2 inspection is less intensive and it is possible that not all areas of learning are included.

Where there are significant unsatisfactory grades from cycle 1, the intensity of the cycle 2 inspection is broadly the same as cycle 1, and all significant areas of learning are inspected.

Providers that have not previously been inspected will receive a full inspection.

Overall effectiveness

The grades given for areas of learning and leadership and management will be used to arrive at a judgement about the overall effectiveness of the provider.

An **outstanding** provider should typically have leadership and management and at least half of the areas of learning judged to be a grade 1. All area of learning grades will be graded 1 or 2.

A **good** provider should have leadership and management and at least half of the area of learning grades judged to be a grade 2 or better. A good training provider should not have any grade 4s, and few grade 3s in the areas of learning.

A **satisfactory** provider should have adequate or better grades in leadership and management and in at least two thirds of the area of learning grades. An adequate provider might have a range of grades across areas of learning, some of which might be graded 4.

Provision will normally be deemed to be **inadequate** where more than one third of the area of learning grades and/or leadership and management are judged to be inadequate.

The final decision as to whether the provision is inadequate rests with the Chief Inspector of Adult Learning.

Grading

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

- *grade 1 - outstanding*
- *grade 2 - good*
- *grade 3 - satisfactory*
- *grade 4 - inadequate*

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INSPECTION REPORT

DESCRIPTION OF THE PROVIDER

1. Gordon Franks Training (GFT) was founded in 1983 by Gordon Franks as a training partnership. Based in Birmingham, it provides work-based learning programmes for 218 learners in retailing and wholesaling, warehousing and distribution, business administration and customer service programmes. It also provides employability training under a preparation for life and work programme and a New Deal contract with Jobcentre Plus. Entry to Employment (E2E) training is also offered for learners with additional learning and social needs. There are 40 staff of whom 25 are full time.

2. The service industry is the main area of employment in Birmingham. Public administration, finance, information technology (IT), retail, distribution hotels and restaurants are the main employment sectors. According to the 1991 census, the unemployment rate in the West Midlands area was 5.1 per cent, compared with the national rate of 4.7 per cent. The proportion of people from minority ethnic groups in the West Midlands is 20.4 per cent, compared with a national rate of 8.8 per cent. In 2004-05 the proportion of young people achieving five or more general certificates of secondary education at grade C or above was 51 per cent, compared with the national average of 52 per cent.

OVERALL EFFECTIVENESS

Grade 2

3. **The overall effectiveness of the provision is good.** Leadership and management and equality of opportunity are good. Quality improvement is satisfactory. The provision in retail and commercial enterprise, preparation for life and work, and business administration and law was judged to be good in all areas inspected.

4. **The inspection team was broadly confident in the reliability of the self-assessment process.** The process of self-assessment involves staff in individual teams carrying out self-evaluation of their areas to identify strengths and weaknesses as part of their business planning. The self-assessment report, however, does not have sufficient evaluative judgements. There is insufficient emphasis on retention and achievement, and the grouping together of the apprenticeship programmes does not give enough detail about the different programmes within it. Inspectors did agree, however, with a number of strengths, particularly relating to induction and learner support.

5. **The provider has demonstrated that it is in a good position to make improvements.** Since the previous inspection, retention and achievement have improved and are now at least satisfactory in all areas, with retention on some business administration programmes being good. The monitoring of learners' progress is good. The observation of teaching and learning is satisfactory. Internal verification is very thorough.

KEY CHALLENGES FOR GORDON FRANKS TRAINING:

- improve retention and achievement rates
- improve the use of data to monitor performance
- increase the number of training opportunities for employed learners
- increase the range of vocational experience on E2E programmes
- develop a more evaluative self-assessment process

GRADES

grade 1 = outstanding, grade 2 = good, grade 3 = satisfactory, grade 4 = inadequate

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

Retail and commercial enterprise			2
Contributory areas:	Number of learners	Contributory grade	
Retailing and wholesaling Apprenticeships for young people	58	2	
Warehousing and distribution Apprenticeships for young people	18	2	

Preparation for life and work			2
Contributory areas:	Number of learners	Contributory grade	
Employability training New Deal for young people	43	2	
Entry to Employment	49	2	

Business administration and law			2
Contributory areas:	Number of learners	Contributory grade	
Administration Apprenticeships for young people	21	2	
Customer service Apprenticeships for young people	27	2	

ABOUT THE INSPECTION

6. The retail and commercial enterprise, business administration and law, preparation for life and work areas of learning were inspected. Evidence was collected from warehousing and distribution and customer service, which were not reported on and graded separately. However, the evidence supported judgements in the key findings of the report. Inspectors visited GFT twice in the five weeks leading up to the final inspection week.

Number of inspectors	4
Number of inspection days	14
Number of learners interviewed	80
Number of staff interviewed	39
Number of employers interviewed	9
Number of locations/sites/learning centres visited	14
Number of visits	2

KEY FINDINGS

Achievements and standards

7. **There is good development of personal and work skills on E2E and New Deal programmes.** Learners are well motivated and improve their confidence through participating in learning activities that prepare them for work. They develop skills such as interview practice and effective communication.
8. **There is good retention on most programmes.** The retention rate for the advanced apprenticeships in customer service is 100 per cent while the retention figure for the administration apprenticeship is 80 per cent. Of the 21 learners who started in 2004-05, 20 are still in learning.
9. **The development of personal skills by learners is good.** Learners are encouraged from induction week onwards to increase their self-awareness and reflect on their learning experiences both at GFT and in the workplace.
10. Achievement of qualifications has improved on E2E programmes. The achievement rates have risen from 56 per cent in 2004 to 72 per cent at the time of inspection. Progression into jobs, further education or apprenticeships has also recently improved.
11. Framework achievement is satisfactory. Learners achieve very good pass rates for their technical certificate and satisfactory rates for key skills.
12. GFT has improved its retention and achievement rates in retailing considerably since the previous inspection report. Retention rates in retailing have improved from 24 per cent in 2001-02 to 53 per cent in 2004-05. Achievement rates have improved from 20 per cent in 2001-02 to 41 per cent in 2003-04. Retention has also improved in warehousing and

distribution.

13. Learners show a high degree of confidence when dealing with customers and are able to work effectively with colleagues.

14. **Learners are making slow progress with their national vocational qualification (NVQ) work.** Progress on both customer service and administration apprenticeships is slow. Although learners receive regular assessor visits and draw action plans for their next targets, these are not sufficiently clear.

The quality of provision

Grades given to learning sessions

	Grade 1	Grade 2	Grade 3	Grade 4	Total
Retail and commercial enterprise	0	1	1	0	2
Preparation for life and work	1	2	3	0	6
Total	1	3	4	0	8

15. **Learners receive very effective support at GFT.** Learners receive an initial assessment very early on during induction week to identify additional needs with literacy and numeracy. Their learning needs are built into actions forming part of their individual learning plans. Each learner is allocated a mentor for the first three months of the programme. Learners receive weekly visits from their mentor or assessors.

16. **Induction is good for E2E and New Deal programmes.** Both programmes have a well-planned induction over a period of weeks, incorporating a wide range of activities appropriate for young people. During induction on both programmes, learners acquire new employability skills, such as communication and interviewing skills, and increase their confidence in their own abilities.

17. Work placements are adequate for retailing and business administration programmes. Learners have work placements within a wide range of companies. Employers are supportive and provide on-the-job training to help collect evidence.

18. Induction is good for apprenticeship programmes. Learners receive a week-long induction during which they are encouraged to focus on their goals and ambitions and to build an individual learning plan to help them achieve their objectives. Employed learners receive a shorter version of induction in the workplace.

19. Teaching and learning is satisfactory. Tutors use a wide range of resources and the training rooms are adequately decorated and promote a good learning environment. However, during some sessions there is not enough use of well-produced handouts. Some rooms are too small to accommodate larger groups of learners. Within E2E, there is some excellent motivational teaching.

20. A satisfactory range of learning opportunities is provided on E2E and New Deal programmes. Learners attend work placements and job tasters in sectors such as retail and childcare. However, there are not enough work-placement opportunities for those learners interested in the construction and engineering industries.

21. There are limited progress routes for business administration and retailing programmes. Progress routes for learners include a level 2 and 3 on customer service and business administration apprenticeship. Within retailing and warehousing, there are no facilities to complete an advanced apprenticeship. Many learners transfer to customer service programmes in order to continue their progress.

22. There are insufficient opportunities for learners to gain literacy and numeracy qualifications. E2E staff are not appropriately qualified to teach and assess literacy and numeracy. However, they do keep up to date with current curriculum developments.

Leadership and management

23. There is a good business planning process in individual teams. Each team produces its own business plan which contributes towards the company's overall business plan. Staff understand their roles and responsibilities in the achievement of the business plan targets.

24. Communications, both internal and external, are good. GFT holds regular meetings focusing on the progress of individual learners and the current performance against targets. GFT has good working relationships with employers.

25. The appraisal process and the staff development programme are satisfactory. Staff are well qualified or working towards recognised qualifications. However, in E2E, some staff are not qualified to provide the required learner support for literacy, numeracy and language.

26. Accommodation and facilities are satisfactory. GFT moved to its new premises in July 2005. Teaching rooms are adequately decorated and equipped with a wide range of teaching materials and IT equipment. However, some rooms are too small for larger groups.

27. Staffing is satisfactory. Teams work well together. Despite one team leader being absent from the business, their role is being delivered with minimum disruption to learners. In E2E, during staff shortages, learners do not receive enough support.

28. The use of data to monitor performance is unsatisfactory. Progress of learners towards completion is recorded on a database but not all programmes do this consistently. Within GFT there are different systems for recording and managing data.

29. GFT has satisfactory policies on equal opportunities including anti-bullying. Staff display a good understanding of diversity and are committed to equality of opportunity. However, learners display a very basic understanding of equality of opportunity.

30. There is a dedicated team of mentors at GFT. All learners receive mentoring support during their first three months on the programme. Mentors provide learners with support on social and learning need, complementing the support tutors and assessors offer. Mentors have good links with external agencies in order to provide effective specialist support to all learners.

31. GFT has a satisfactory range of programmes to widen participation. E2E learners develop employability skills before deciding whether to continue their training or to obtain

employment. GFT is also involved in supporting local schools as part of their key stage 4 programme facilitating work experience placements and delivering basic employability training (BET).

32. At GFT there is a quality assurance manual that covers all key aspects of the provision. Each team has a specific quality assurance manual with set out guidelines on the required procedures to be adhered to. These are complemented by useful flow charts clearly displaying the processes relevant to each department.

33. The collection of feedback from learners and employers is satisfactory. Improvements to the way training is delivered have been made as a consequence of learner feedback. Employers also offer feedback to GFT on a formal yearly basis.

34. GFT has a satisfactory programme for observing teaching and learning. There are clear guidelines on the criteria to observe in each lesson and it has helped tutors in focusing on their individual performance. However, GFT has recently increased the number of observations to ensure that best practice is quickly established by the tutors.

35. **Internal verification is very thorough.** There are three internal verifiers who offer good support to assessors and they visit them at the workplace to observe them carrying out assessments. There are frequent meetings between internal verifiers and assessors giving consistency to the internal verification process.

36. Staff are involved in the self-assessment process. **However, the self-assessment report is insufficiently evaluative.** There is insufficient detail on retention and achievement and the grouping of all apprenticeship programmes does not facilitate an accurate and informative perspective on each area of learning. The objectives and actions identified in the self-assessment development plan are not specific enough and do not contain realistic and challenging timescales.

Leadership and management

Strengths

- good business planning by staff teams
- good internal and external communications
- successful mentoring of learners
- thorough internal verification

Weaknesses

- unsatisfactory use of data to monitor performance
- insufficiently evaluative self-assessment and development planning

Retail and commercial enterprise

Strengths

- good development of personal skills
- good learner support

Weaknesses

- no significant weaknesses identified

Preparation for life and work

Employability training

Grade 2

Strengths

- good development of personal and work skills
- good induction

Weaknesses

- insufficient opportunities to gain literacy and numeracy accreditation on E2E programmes

Business administration and law

Strengths

- good retention on most courses
- very effective support for learners
- good communications

Weaknesses

- slow progress

WHAT LEARNERS LIKE ABOUT GORDON FRANKS TRAINING:

- 'GFT helped me get a job'
- being treated as an individual
- the support provided by assessors - 'the assessors are always there when you need them'
- 'I really understand mathematics now'
- 'it's much better than being at school'
- the support they receive from staff when filling in application forms

WHAT LEARNERS THINK GORDON FRANKS TRAINING COULD IMPROVE:

- the accommodation facilities - there are not enough women's toilets
- 'the training rooms could be bigger'
- the refreshments facilities
- the number of mathematics and English books available at all levels

DETAILED INSPECTION FINDINGS

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

Grade 2

Strengths

- good business planning by staff teams
- good internal and external communications
- successful mentoring of learners
- thorough internal verification

Weaknesses

- unsatisfactory use of data to monitor performance
- insufficiently evaluative self-assessment and development planning

37. Business planning by staff teams is good. Individual teams produce their own business plans. These focus on performance during the previous year and set performance targets. The plans also cover staff development. Staff fully understand their role in business planning. They are aware of the targets specifically contained in each plan and their own responsibilities towards achieving them. There is a clear focus on improving individual learner performance and tutors and assessors regularly discuss these performance targets during team meetings. Retention and achievement rates have improved across all areas since the previous inspection.

38. Internal and external communications are good. Weekly team meetings focus on current issues and the progress of individual learners. Monthly meetings are used to discuss current performance against targets, as well as standard agenda items such as health and safety and staff development. Company meetings involve all staff teams to discuss progress and share good practice. There is an open management style and the managing director has facilitated the introduction of a number of innovative approaches to teaching and working with learners. Teams work well together. Since relocating to new premises, staff share the same working area and informal communication is good. GFT has close working relationships with employers through very regular visits by assessors and mentors. However, the use of closer links with the senior management of large retail companies to help them better understand the training process has not yet been successful.

39. The overall management of the areas of learning is satisfactory. Internal communications with staff are frequent and effective, with well-planned regular formal meetings that include recorded action points. Recently, the training programme leaders have worked well to manage effectively an area of learning during a colleague's absence. Each area of learning is managed effectively and assessors are well supported by managers.

40. The appraisal process and staff development programme are satisfactory. They prioritise the qualifications, awards, and other training programmes staff need to carry out their role within GFT. Most staff are well qualified or are working towards recognised qualifications. However, in some areas there are no staff trained to provide nationally recognised literacy, numeracy and language support. Staff are encouraged to attend personal development training in addition to regular in-house training events.

41. Accommodation and facilities are satisfactory and provide an appropriate learning environment. GFT moved to new premises in July 2005. Teaching rooms are adequately decorated and equipped with an appropriate range of teaching materials and IT equipment.

42. Staffing levels are satisfactory. One team leader is currently on long-term sick leave, but this role is being covered temporarily by another staff member with minimum disruption to learners. There are currently two vacancies for tutors on the E2E programme. The recruitment and selection of staff are satisfactory.

43. The use of data to monitor performance is unsatisfactory. Individual staff teams keep records of learner progress and retention and achievement rates. Information on the number of learners starting or leaving programmes, against learner profiles, is recorded separately each month. Progress of learners towards completion of the apprenticeship is updated on a monthly basis. This information is not used consistently across all programme areas. Some information is not adequate to compare data to analyse patterns. The use of percentages to illustrate completion of NVQ elements and units is not always accurate. The use of different systems to record and manage data do not help management analyse progress, performance, and trends, or identify necessary improvements. During the inspection, GFT had difficulties in producing data requested by inspectors.

Equality of opportunity

Contributory grade 2

44. GFT has satisfactory policies on equal opportunities, including anti-bullying. Learners receive a useful shortened version of the policy, which is also given to employers. Regular visits by assessors ensure that learners are well treated in the workplace and have access to an appropriate range of work activities.

45. GFT has a dedicated team of three qualified mentors. They provide a successful support service over and above that of the tutors and assessors. Mentors develop good working relationships with learners and make good use of a range of external support services. All learners are mentored during their first three months on the programme. Where appropriate, learners are visited in the workplace for pastoral support. In a number of cases, mentoring support has helped retain learners at risk of leaving their programmes.

46. Staff are fully committed to equality and diversity. However, there is little active promotion of equality and diversity to employers, and access to some aspects of the training programme, such as induction, are not available to some employed learners. GFT produced detailed diversity data on referrals, starts, and achievements by ethnicity and gender, with quarterly reports sent out to team leaders. However, analysis of trends or actions are not always carried out. There is no formal record of complaints. The proportion of learners from minority ethnic groups reflects that of the local population.

47. There is a satisfactory range of programmes to widen participation. The E2E programme helps learners develop employability skills before being placed on apprenticeship programmes, gaining jobs, or moving on to further education. GFT works with local schools as part of the key stage 4 programme, delivering student apprenticeships, BET, and finding work experience for school pupils.

Quality improvement

Contributory grade 3

48. Internal verification is thorough. The three internal verifiers provide adequate support

for assessors, ensuring that new assessors working towards relevant assessor awards are closely monitored. An internal verification database is used to ensure that all learners' portfolios are sampled at regular intervals throughout and at the end of their programme. Internal verifiers make regular visits to the workplace to observe assessors carrying out assessments. All assessors are visited at least twice a year. Standardisation meetings are held between internal verifiers and assessors to ensure best practice is shared between assessors.

49. Since the previous inspection, GFT has made some improvements to ensure the quality of its provision. The monitoring of learners' progress is adequate and supported by the effective working relationships between tutors, assessors and mentors. Retention and achievement rates across all areas are improving overall.

50. GFT has a quality assurance manual that covers all key aspects of the organisation. Individual teams have specific quality assurance manuals giving guidance on procedures to be followed. These are supported by useful flow charts.

51. The collection of feedback from learners is satisfactory and takes place during and at the end of programmes. Changes have been made in response to feedback including changing attendance patterns from block to day release. Employers also provide feedback on a yearly basis.

52. GFT has a satisfactory programme for observing teaching and learning, which has been recently amended following external support. Tutors assess their own performance, are set lesson objectives, and given guidance on the use of teaching and learning resources.

53. The self-assessment process involves staff carrying out self-evaluation of their teams, and identifying strengths and weaknesses, as part of their business planning. The self-assessment report is, however, insufficiently evaluative. There is insufficient emphasis on retention and achievement, and the grouping together of the apprenticeship programmes does not give enough detail about the different programmes within it. Inspectors agreed with a number of strengths in the report, particularly relating to induction and learner support. Some of the objectives and actions identified in the subsequent development plan are not sufficiently specific.

AREAS OF LEARNING

Retail and commercial enterprise

Grade 2

Contributory areas:	Number of learners	Contributory grade
Retailing and wholesaling Apprenticeships for young people	58	2
Warehousing and distribution Apprenticeships for young people	18	2

54. Currently there are 76 apprentices on work-based learning programmes in retail and commercial enterprise. Of these, 58 are in retailing and wholesaling and 18 are in warehousing and distribution. Thirty-three learners are fully employed and 43 are on work placements. Learners are aged between 16 and 25 and most are receiving literacy, numeracy and social skills support. GFT recruits most learners through Connexions. A variety of retail and distribution employers provide work placements across Birmingham. Staff from GFT carry out induction at providers' premises and in the workplace. Learners attend the learning centre to study for their key skills and technical certificates. There are 11 assessors. Staff visit learners in the workplace every one to two weeks to carry out training, assessments and progress reviews.

Strengths

- good development of personal skills
- good learner support

Weaknesses

- no significant weaknesses identified

Achievement and standards

55. GFT has improved its retention and achievement rates considerably since the previous inspection. It has implemented several initiatives to improve achievement. The induction format has been changed to help learners focus on their development and personal goals. The technical certificate and key skills are now delivered over a 10-week period rather than a block one-week session. In the retailing apprenticeship, achievement rates have risen from 20 per cent in 2001-02 to 41 per cent in 2003-04. Retention rates for the warehousing and distribution apprenticeship have also improved, although the number of learners on the programme is very low. The 2004-05 intake in warehousing and distribution comprise 21 learners, of whom 18 are still in learning. The retention rate for the retailing apprenticeship has also improved from 24 per cent in 2001-02 to 53 per cent in 2004-05. All the retained learners in 2003-04 completed their apprenticeship framework.

56. The development of personal skills by learners is good. Induction is designed to develop learners' self-awareness and help them focus on their personal and professional aims and goals. During induction week, learners begin to plan their career and development. Employed learners, however, are not provided with sufficient time to plan in enough detail. Induction week includes an award ceremony. At this event, learners

present clearly and confidently their individual learning plans. Parents, guardians and external agencies are invited to attend this event. Learners are encouraged to reflect on their own experiences during the training programme by completing a diary. Some learners find this particularly useful to record their achievements at work and to help them learn from their actions.

57. Learners work well to meet employers' requirements and standards. They develop good self-confidence and work well with colleagues and customers.

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

LSC funded work-based learning																
Apprenticeships	2004-05		2003-04		2002-03		2001-02		2000-01							
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Number of starts	95		99		75	100	77	100	23	100						
Retained*	8		47		42	56	20	26	10	43						
Successfully completed	4		41		39	52	16	21	8	35						
Still in learning	68		6		2	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

The quality of provision

58. There is good support for learners. Learners' needs are assessed during recruitment and at induction. Once their needs have been assessed, an action plan is built into the individual learning plans. Learners receive fortnightly visits by their assessors. A GFT mentor is also allocated to each learner for the first three months of their programme. After this time, learners can choose to continue whether or not to receive this support. Mentors offer support relating to social and learning needs. In 2003-03, when the mentoring was implemented, the key skills completion rate was 76 per cent. This has improved to 98 per cent in 2004-05.

59. Key skills support for learners is good. In response to learner feedback, GFT reviewed the way key skills are taught and assessed. Key skills are now taught over a 10-week period. The sessions offer good support with literacy and numeracy and prepare learners well for their project work. Learners are able to include evidence collected during these sessions into their own portfolios.

60. Learners receive good support from their managers and workplace supervisors. Learners are valued members of the team. Managers are involved in learners' progress reviews. However, this is done informally with the assessor rather than the learner. Some learners have gained jobs at their workplace following their training and some employed learners have been promoted to supervisory roles.

61. Teaching and learning are satisfactory. Handouts used by some tutors are not sufficiently well presented. Observations of teaching and learning are scheduled regularly and provide tutors with detailed feedback. GFT has identified the need to increase the number of observations to ensure best practice and new teaching techniques are more quickly established by tutors.

62. Learners display a good understanding of their preferred individual learning styles. Learners are actively encouraged to incorporate their hobbies and interests into the learning activities.

63. Learners are well motivated and enjoy their work placements. Most learners are placed in their chosen field and have good working relationships with colleagues and workplace supervisors. Some employers carry out their own award ceremonies to acknowledge the learners' achievements.

64. There are not enough progression opportunities for learners. However, some learners complete their frameworks and move on to an NVQ in customer service.

Leadership and management

65. Internal and external communications are adequate. There is regular formal and informal communication. Assessors and mentors communicate effectively to ensure they are up to date on learners' progress. Employers are kept up to date with their learners' progress.

66. Once a year, staff at GFT are involved in creating the company's business plan. Each team contributes with their improvement suggestions for their department's weaknesses. All teams are involved in the self-assessment process and development plan. However, the self-assessment report is not sufficiently judgemental and does not contain enough detail about retail as an area of learning.

67. Accommodation and facilities are adequate, although some of the training rooms are too small for larger groups of learners. Noise levels can be high due to the proximity of the training rooms. Staffing levels are adequate and staff offer appropriate cover in the absence of key members.

68. Internal verifiers make regular visits to the workplace to observe assessors carrying out assessments. All assessors are visited twice a year. Since the previous inspection, GFT has designed an internal verification database to plan the sampling of learners' portfolios at regular points throughout their programme.

69. GFT operates an open-door policy in its selection and recruitment processes. Staff are fully committed to diversity and learners have a basic understanding of equality of opportunity. Assessors do not use their visits to the workplace to reinforce learners' understanding of equality of opportunity.

Preparation for life and work**Grade 2**

Contributory areas:	Number of learners	Contributory grade
<i>Employability training</i>		2
New Deal for young people	43	2
Entry to Employment	49	2

70. There are 92 learners on preparation for life and work programmes, of whom 49 are on the E2E programme and 43 are participants on the New Deal programme. Sixty per cent of the learners are men and 19 per cent are from minority ethnic groups. Learners on the E2E programme can work towards a range of vocational and personal development and key skills qualifications at level 1 and 2. There are five full-time E2E staff, including a team leader and a deputy team leader. Referrals are from Connexions, other training providers and the youth offending team. All New Deal participants are referred to the programme from Jobcentre Plus. They are enrolled on literacy, numeracy and language skills programmes, full-time education and training, and intensive activity programmes. There are six full-time staff including a team leader and an administrator. The programme is full time, lasts for 26 weeks, and is aimed at learners up to level 1. Most of the programmes take place at the main learning centre but work tasters in retailing, warehousing and childcare are arranged with employers at venues throughout Birmingham.

Employability training**Grade 2*****Strengths***

- good development of personal and work skills
- good induction

Weaknesses

- insufficient opportunities to gain literacy and numeracy accreditation on E2E programmes

Achievement and standards

71. Achievement of qualifications has improved on E2E programmes. The achievement rate has increased from 56 per cent in 2004-05 to 72 per cent at the time of inspection. Retention on New Deal programmes has also improved from 38 per cent in 2002-03 to 68 per cent at the time of inspection. Progression to employment, further education or apprenticeships was identified as poor on E2E programmes in the self-assessment report, but has recently improved. A target set for progression rates at 55 per cent for E2E learners has already been reached for 2005-06. The attendance rate on programmes was 80 per cent during inspection.

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

LSC funded work-based learning																
Entry to Employment	2004-05		2003-04		2002-03											
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Number of starts	188		198	100	24	100										
Progression ¹	58		60	30	10	42										
Achieved objectives ²	41		52	26	8	33										
Still in learning	49		0	0	0	0										

1. Measured in terms of learners' movement to further training, education or employment, during or after their training

2. These being the key objectives identified for each learner while on E2E

Jobcentre Plus funded programmes																
New Deal for Young People	2005-06		2004-05		2003-04		2002-03									
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Number of starts	71		130	100	171	100	161	100								
Retained*	51		54	42	58	34	51	32								
Planned learning completed	5		54	42	58	34	51	32								
Gained job	4		24	18	39	27	34	21								
Still in training	43		0	0	0	0	0	0								

*retained participants are those who have stayed in learning for at least the planned duration of their programme, or have successfully completed their programme within the time allowed, or who have gained employment during their time on the programme

The quality of provision

72. Induction is good and was identified as a strength in the self-assessment report. The E2E induction takes place over four weeks and the New Deal induction takes over two weeks. There is thorough planning of the inductions to incorporate a wide range of activities appropriate for young people. Learners receive an initial assessment to help monitor their progress in literacy and numeracy. Targets are set for learners and their progress is reviewed on a regular basis. Learners are helped to identify a learning style that will help them on their programme. Enrichment activities contribute to learners' achievement and enjoyment. In the New Deal induction there is a focus on skills needed to prepare for employment such as communication and interview skills. Tutors make good use of a range of particularly effective teaching styles and methods and encourage learners to become involved in activities they have never done before, such as painting and circus skills. Learners develop new skills and improve their confidence.

73. Teaching and learning is satisfactory with no unsatisfactory teaching sessions observed during the inspection. The better sessions are well planned and tutors have good working relationships with learners. There is good use of visual aids, such as posters and good-quality worksheets, to illustrate what needs to be done to gain a job. Good use is made of information and communications technology in several sessions. However, for some sessions, aims and objectives of the session are unclear and the pace is slow. Resources are satisfactory, but some rooms are not an adequate size for the number of learners.

74. Participants can work towards a range of qualifications up to level 1 on New Deal programmes and learners can work up level 2 on E2E programmes. Work placements and tasters are set up for learners in retail, childcare and warehouse work with local colleges, training organisations and employers. However, some learners are not able to follow their vocational route of choice as it is difficult to find suitable work placements in engineering and construction industries.

75. There are insufficient opportunities for learners to gain literacy and numeracy qualifications on E2E programmes. The self-assessment report identified slow achievement of new qualifications as a weakness. There are very few opportunities for learners to gain a qualification in literacy or numeracy apart from one qualification that covers more general work skills such as presentation or curriculum vitae skills. E2E staff are not appropriately qualified to teach and assess literacy or numeracy. However, they have recently received training in areas such as the adult core curriculum. Learners with literacy or numeracy needs have to repeat sessions rather than receive individual support. Where staff shortages have occurred there is not enough support for learners.

Leadership and management

76. Communication is good. E2E and Jobcentre Plus teams meet regularly to share information about learners and good practice. Assessment and verification processes are thorough with clear procedures in place. Regular verification is followed through by appropriate actions. Staff have undertaken a significant amount of training in the past year. The E2E team has taken part in a lot of training in motivational teaching but not in literacy and numeracy training. Observations of teaching and learning take place on a regular basis. Tutors receive feedback and ensure appropriate action is taken.

77. The self-assessment process was partially successful in identifying the strengths and weaknesses found during the inspection. However, the layout of the report is not easy to follow or understand in places.

78. Learners have an adequate understanding of equality of opportunity. The programmes are inclusive and are attended by a significant proportion of learners from minority ethnic groups. Learners have a good understanding of the complaints procedure. However, some tutors do not know how best to ensure equality of opportunity.

Business administration and law**Grade 2**

Contributory areas:	Number of learners	Contributory grade
Administration Apprenticeships for young people	21	2
Customer service Apprenticeships for young people	27	2

79. There are currently 48 learners on work-based learning programmes in business administration and customer service programmes. Of these, 27 are on customer service programmes and 21 are on administration programmes. Overall, there are 18 apprentices and 30 advanced apprentices. Many learners attend the learning centre once a week for key skills training and assessment, their technical certificate and some aspects of their NVQ, including portfolio development. Assessors visit employed learners unable to attend the training days at the centre, to provide the same training on an individual basis. Assessors visit learners in the workplace for progress reviews and assessments. GFT has 14 staff supporting the learners. Learners work in a wide variety of companies from small employers providing specialised services to nationally recognised organisations all based in and around Birmingham.

Strengths

- good retention on most courses
- very effective support for learners
- good communications

Weaknesses

- slow progress

Achievement and standards

80. Retention is good on most courses. For example, retention is 100 per cent for 2004-05 on the advanced apprenticeship in customer service. This has risen from 40 per cent in 2003-04. On the administration apprenticeship programme 20 of the 21 learners are still on their programme.

81. Achievement of frameworks is satisfactory, with good pass rates for the technical certificate, and satisfactory rates for key skills. Much of the training for these is provided at the learning centre. Learners who do not attend the centre receive individual training in the workplace. All training is judged to be satisfactory. Learners gain a wide range of skills and increased levels of confidence.

82. Learners make slow progress with their NVQ work. Of the learners on the administration apprenticeship programme who have been on the course for more than eight months, nine have achieved only one or two units and seven have not achieved any. On the customer service programme, two advanced apprentices have been on programme for nearly two years and have achieved only one unit. A further five advanced apprentices have not achieved any units for the past 15 months. However, these learners have

completed all or some of their key skills.

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

LSC funded work-based learning																
Advanced apprenticeships	2004-05		2003-04		2002-03		2001-02		2000-01							
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Number of starts	12		20		6	100	1	100	4	100						
Retained*	0		2		1	17	0	0	0	0						
Successfully completed	0		0		1	17	0	0	0	0						
Still in learning	12		6		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																
Apprenticeships	2004-05		2003-04		2002-03		2001-02		2000-01							
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Number of starts	31		15	100	2	100	13	100	5	100						
Retained*	0		11	73	2	100	5	38	3	60						
Successfully completed	0		9	60	1	50	5	38	1	20						
Still in learning	28		2	13	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

The quality of provision

83. Learners receive very effective support. During induction an initial assessment is carried out to identify learners who require additional help with their literacy and numeracy skills. Individual learning styles and communication skills are also monitored. Each learner is allocated a mentor who continues to visit them at their workplaces. Learners are encouraged to keep a log in which they record any thoughts they have about their progress or their career aims. Learners understand their own progress. Learners receive frequent and regular visits from staff and have very good working relationships with staff. Work placements are good. Employers provide good support, in-house training and help with collective NVQ evidence. They participate fully in progress reviews. Assessments are carried out frequently and learners fully understand what is being assessed, and whether they need to complete any further tasks.

84. Learners receive frequent assessor visits where new action plans are produced. These do not always have clear short-term targets. It is not always clear if set tasks are being completed or what progress is being made towards achieving them. Some learners do not complete set work for several weeks and this is not monitored by assessors. Portfolios are well laid out and are generally satisfactory. Some learners' portfolios are good. Assessors and verifiers are clear about what work learners have completed, but there is no overall analysis of achievement timescales for the different units.

85. The progress routes for learners are limited to level 2 and 3 apprenticeships in customer service and until recently on level 2 in administration. There is now a level 3

advanced apprenticeship available. Teaching and learning are satisfactory.

86. Induction for employed learners is carried out in the workplace. Some of these learners are not given a comprehensive coverage of all the components provided in the full week induction received by learners on work placements.

Leadership and management

87. Communication is good. There is good team working between assessors and verifiers, mentors, employers and learners. Weekly assessor meetings are held and problems with individual learners are discussed. Other staff members are contacted for help if necessary. Mentors work closely with assessors and, if necessary, provide up-to-date information about learners. The frequent contact between assessors and verifiers ensures that the assessment and verification is rigorous and fair. Standardisation meetings and observations are carried out regularly. Some learners have moved from E2E onto retailing programmes after discussions with staff. Staff have open access to the senior management team at GFT and their individual views are listened to and acted upon. Staff working patterns are adjusted to meet their personal circumstances.

88. The operational management of the business administration programmes is satisfactory. Some of the previous weaknesses highlighted in the previous inspection report have now been tackled to improve retention and key skills achievement.

89. Some learners do not have a good understanding of all aspects of equality of opportunity. The self-assessment report is broadly accurate, but it does not contain sufficient detail.

