

Gloucestershire Training Group Ltd

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Background information

Inspection judgements

Inspectors use a four-point scale to summarise their judgements about achievement and standards, the quality of provision, and leadership and management, which includes a grade for equality of opportunity.

Key for inspection grades

Grade 1	Outstanding
Grade 2	Good
Grade 3	Satisfactory
Grade 4	Inadequate

Further information can be found on how inspection judgements are made on www.ofsted.gov.uk.

Scope of the inspection

In deciding the scope of the inspection, inspectors take account of the provider's most recent self-assessment report and development plans, and comments from the local Learning and Skills Council (LSC) or other funding body. Where appropriate, inspectors also consider the previous inspection report (www.ofsted.gov.uk), reports from the inspectorates' quality monitoring or annual assessment visits, and data on learners and their achievements over the period since the previous inspection.

In addition to reporting on overall effectiveness of the organisation, its capacity to improve further, achievement and standards, quality of provision and leadership and management, this inspection focused on specialist provision in:

- Engineering and manufacturing technologies

Description of the provider

1. Gloucestershire Training Group Limited (GTG) is a small engineering training association. It has charitable status and is owned and managed by nine local engineering manufacture and production companies. It provides work-based learning in engineering for learners from the member companies and from 16 non-member companies. GTG trains apprentices and advanced apprentices in electrical, electronic and mechanical engineering. It also provides a range of courses and services to its members and customers. The proportion of commercial programmes is small and increasing.
2. GTG's engineering training centre is based on a small industrial site in Gloucester. Learners attend the training centre for most of their off-the-job training and key skills. Learners attend local colleges for the technical certificate component of the apprenticeship framework. Most attend Gloucestershire College of Arts and Technology while one employer uses City of Bristol College. Plans are in place to deliver a technical certificate in the training centre from September 2007.
3. GTG is managed by a chief executive who is also the group training manager. He is supported by a deputy group training manager, a training co-ordinator, two support staff, a senior training and safety officer and a team of eight training instructors. There are 70 advanced apprentices and 14 apprentices. Most learners spend the first 46 weeks in the training centre in the foundation phase of their training on a performing engineering operations NVQ at level 2, plus additional courses and key skills. At the time of the inspection most of the 42 first year learners were involved with their final projects or completing additional NVQ units at the training centre. All other learners are in their workplaces continuing their on-the-job training and/or working towards an NVQ at level 3.

Summary of grades awarded

Effectiveness of provision	Good: Grade 2
Capacity to improve	Satisfactory: Grade 3
Achievement and standards	Good: Grade 2
Quality of provision	Good: Grade 2
Leadership and management	Good: Grade 2
Equality of opportunity	Contributory grade: Satisfactory: Grade 3

Sector subject area

Engineering and manufacturing technologies	Good: Grade 2
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Overall judgement

Effectiveness of provision

Good: Grade 2

4. The overall effectiveness of the provision is good. Achievement and standards, the quality of provision and leadership and management are all good. Provision in engineering and manufacturing technologies is also good. Equality of opportunity is satisfactory.

Capacity to improve

Satisfactory: Grade 3

5. GTG's capacity to improve is satisfactory. Steps taken to improve since it was last inspected have been adequate to maintain standards. Over the past three years success rates have been satisfactory or better, but broadly static. GTG has maintained the good grades it achieved at its reinspection by the Adult Learning Inspectorate in 2004. It has made some progress in addressing weaknesses identified in the reinspection report. Self-assessment and development planning have been more successful in maintaining standards than improving them.
6. The self-assessment process is well established and suitably inclusive. GTG makes appropriate use of learner and employer views obtained through questionnaires. Response rates are good. Consultation with staff is appropriate. Data is used appropriately in development planning, but underlying analysis does not sufficiently identify trends. The self-assessment report is well written and covers all activities and key questions in the common inspection framework. Strengths and areas for improvement are generally those with significant impact on learners. The current report accurately identifies strengths, but underestimates some areas for improvement. Inspectors agreed with the grades given in the report.

Key strengths

- Very good apprentice framework success rates
- Effective preparation for engineering employment
- Good progression and achievement of additional qualifications
- Strong employer involvement
- Good support for learners
- Particularly strong and effective action to meet needs
- Effective operation of training centre

Key areas for improvement

- Insufficient monitoring of workplace skills development
- Insufficient follow-up of identified actions to improve provision
- Ineffective links with colleges providing technical certificate training

Main findings

Achievement and standards

Good: Grade 2

7. The overall framework success rate for apprentices is very good at 100% in 2004-05 and 92% in 2005-06. In the last 12 months the rate has continued to be high at 87%. All apprentices and advanced apprentices who complete the first year in the training centre achieve a performing engineering operations NVQ level 2. Most learners complete more units than those required. Most learners successfully complete their key skills in the first year. The success rate for advanced apprentices has been satisfactory for the last three years with approximately two thirds of learners completing all aspects of the framework. The timely success rates are satisfactory and improving.
8. During the first year learners increase in confidence and are particularly well prepared for full-time employment in an engineering environment. They develop a very good work ethic and the disciplines required for employment. The attendance rate is excellent at 98% and time keeping is very closely monitored. Learners produce work to a high standard during their first year in the training centre. All work is thoroughly checked and feedback given to learners.
9. Many learners gain additional qualifications and skills in the training centre and in the workplace. The technical certificates are often at a higher level than that required by the framework. Learners gain additional specialist skills and qualifications in areas such as electronics, pneumatics and abrasive wheel. Some of this training is to meet the needs of the workplace and some is to further develop learners' skills and knowledge. Learners achieve promotion and progress well in the workplace. Several learners are now studying or have completed degree courses following the apprenticeships programme.

Quality of provision

Good: Grade 2

10. Employers are very involved and committed to their learners' training. The apprenticeship programmes form an integral part of most employers' human resources strategies to meet the long-term needs of the business. Learners are regularly visited by their employer during the first year in the training centre. Employers use these visits to keep the apprentices informed of developments in the workplace and to review the learners' progress. Learners value these visits and recognise the interest that their employer has in their training.
11. Most employers have well structured in-house training programmes for learners in the second, third and fourth years. One company has a dedicated area for learners to further develop production related skills before starting in the main manufacturing area. Learners acquire good workplace skills and develop a wide range of knowledge and competencies often beyond the requirements of the framework. The NVQ level 3 and optional units are carefully selected to meet the needs and interests of employers and learners. Some employers have in-house assessors. This provides apprentices with easy access to assessment and enables them to progress more effectively. One employer has recruited an additional member of staff to support learners and to co-ordinate the training.

12. The support for learners is good. Individual support, advice and guidance is provided on a wide range of personal issues. GTG staff help learners develop a positive approach to dealing with any difficulties they may be experiencing in their private lives, at college or at work. Careful arrangements and additional risk assessments are conducted to ensure learners with any health related issues can continue with their programme. Employers provide good advice, support and opportunities for learners to progress in their chosen careers as engineers.
13. Initial assessment processes are satisfactory. No learners have been formally identified as needing additional learning support, though GTG recognises that some learners need additional help with mathematics to achieve their technical certificate. Assessments and internal verification are satisfactory. In the last six months an increasing number of assessments are being carried out using observation of learners in the workplace.
14. There are effective systems for monitoring learners' progress. Reviews of learners' progress are regular and most learners are clear on what they need to do to complete the framework. GTG rely on learners to inform them of their progress on the technical certificate programmes at college. Many learners find the college based programmes are insufficiently well structured and some are poorly organised.
15. The monitoring and recording of skills acquired in the workplace is not sufficient for planning assessments and reviewing the progress and development of learners. Some employers are not sufficiently involved in progress reviews to understand the links between the acquisition of workplace skills and the requirements of the NVQ. There is insufficient review of in-house training programmes to identify assessment opportunities and set appropriate targets for learners. There is no formal recognition of the skills developed by apprentices during their second year in the workplace. Most apprentices use log books but these are not checked by GTG or the employer.

Leadership and management

Good: Grade 2

Equality of opportunity

Contributory grade: Satisfactory: Grade 3

16. GTG takes particularly strong and effective action to meet employer and learner needs. The employer-led management board sets a clear strategic direction. GTG provides an appropriate and growing range of both commercial and government funded training. It fulfils well its mission to respond to the business skill needs of local engineering and manufacturing companies. In the last two years learner numbers and the employer customer base have grown. Programmes at the training centre strongly emphasise learners' development of practical and employability skills to ready them for the workplace. GTG provides additional training to meet employer's needs such as electronics modules for mechanical engineering learners. In response to learners' continuing dissatisfaction with the technical skills training they receive from further education colleges, GTG has developed its own technical certificate programme to offer from September 2007.

17. GTG's training centre operates very effectively. Training is well structured and planned. Workshop activity is carefully timetabled to make efficient use of the facilities. Arrangements are well established for learners to start and complete key skills early in their programmes, with exemptions where appropriate. Reports to employers on the quality of learners' work, their productivity, behaviour and attitude are regular and helpful. Training team members have good occupational competence and work together closely and effectively. Formal and informal communication is good. Workshop and other learning resources are satisfactory. An extensive upgrading and refurbishment of centre facilities is imminent. GTG acts appropriately to promote equality of opportunity. Learners' understanding of equality of opportunity is satisfactory.
18. GTG has an appropriate strategy and schedule of activity for quality improvement. The self-assessment process is a well established part of the arrangements. Standard procedures for most key training processes exist and are reviewed annually. However, GTG does not sufficiently follow up actions it identifies as being needed to improve provision. Weaknesses identified by internal audit in learner review records remain at subsequent audits. It has well established arrangements for observing training and workplace assessment but too few observations take place. Managers review GTG's targets for retention and achievement quarterly, but do not analyse trends sufficiently, or the reasons why some learners perform poorly. Retention and achievement rates rarely feature as agenda items at staff or board meetings.
19. Links between GTG and colleges providing technical certificate training to its learners are ineffective. GTG's efforts to influence colleges are largely unsuccessful, and it has made little progress in securing the improvements to the training it believes are necessary. Currently employers pay learners' college fees and reports on learner progress go directly to them rather than GTG.

What learners like:

- 'Really enjoyed the first year, it was well organised'
- 'Instructors were really good, they explained so you could understand'
- 'The practical work was well supported by theory'
- 'They get you ready for the workplace so it's not so much of a shock as it would be if you had come straight from school'
- 'Treated as adults – much more so than in the college'
- 'The friendly, positive atmosphere in the training centre'
- 'If you have any problems at college you can speak to the GTG instructors who always make time to help you'

What learners think could improve:

- The induction – 'There were too many people doing it at the same time and it was too long'
- Resources – 'Could be brought up to date'
- 'More space in the training centre and electronics rooms'
- Handouts – not written clearly
- 'Have reviews more often, this would push you on faster'
- 'Help employers devise training programmes more structured towards the NVQ'

Learners' achievements

Programme	End Year	Success rate	No. of learners*	Provider/c ollege NVQ rate **	National NVQ rate**	Provider/college framework rate**	National framework rate**
Advanced Apprenticeships	03-04	overall	33	70	57	67	47
		timely	26	8	34	8	27
	04-05	overall	13	69	56	69	47
		timely	13	31	33	31	26
	05-06	overall	24	58	54	58	
		timely	24	50	34	50	
Apprenticeships	03-04	overall	14	100	49	79	32
		timely	8	50	22	38	13
	04-05	overall	9	100	52	100	42
		timely	11	91	26	82	19
	05-06	overall	13	100	56	92	
		timely	11	100	37	73	

* Learners who leave later than originally planned are counted in the year they actually leave. This group of learners are then added to the learners who planned to complete in a given year and did so or left earlier than planned

** College and national qualification success rates are calculated using LSC published data derived from the 'Individual Learning Record'

