



TRAINING STANDARDS COUNCIL

INSPECTION REPORT

APRIL 1999

Lex Harvey

SUMMARY

Lex Harvey Limited provides outstanding engineering training and excellent support for modern apprentices. The apprentices are all employed in the company's depots and benefit from well-planned and closely monitored training on and off the job. During their first year, the apprentices have the opportunity to develop their team building and leadership skills. The company promotes equality of opportunity satisfactorily, but women and apprentices from minority ethnic backgrounds are under-represented on training programmes. Apprentices' views are sought, and any identified issues are quickly addressed. The company's quality assurance systems are not used to continuously improve the standard of training.

GRADES

OCCUPATIONAL AREAS	GRADE
Engineering	1

GENERIC AREAS	GRADE
Equal opportunities	3
Trainee support	1
Management of training	2
Quality assurance	3

KEY STRENGTHS

- ◆ trainees' high retention and achievement rates
- ◆ innovative work-based training methods
- ◆ extensive additional learning support
- ◆ excellent opportunities for trainees to further their personal development
- ◆ well planned and co-ordinated on- and off-the-job training
- ◆ frequent checks on the quality of workplace and subcontracted provision

KEY WEAKNESSES

- ◆ missed opportunities for key skills development
- ◆ no initial assessment of key skills
- ◆ adverse effect of work demands in some depots on the assessment process
- ◆ failure of quality assurance to lead to continuous improvement
- ◆ failure of internal verification to ensure consistent standards

INTRODUCTION

1. Lex Harvey Limited has been offering an apprenticeship scheme since 1977. In order to achieve the appropriate qualifications on a three-year programme, the apprentices recruited in 1995 and 1996 were transferred to the modern apprenticeship scheme. The modern apprenticeship programme began in January 1997 with 25 apprentices. The company now has 53 engineering modern apprentices in training. In September 1998, the company decided to pilot a modern apprenticeship programme for business administration apprentices, and now has four apprentices in training. The pilot scheme was not inspected.

2. Lex Harvey Limited is a service company, which hires and services all makes and types of lift-truck. The company is owned jointly by Lex Service PLC and Lombard North Central PLC, which is part of the National Westminster Bank PLC. Lex Harvey Limited operates nationally, with 12 main depots and 5 customer service points distributed throughout the United Kingdom. The company employs 920 staff, of whom 450 operate as mobile engineers. Although the company employs specialist support for corporate functions such as finance, the general manager at each depot is responsible for generating profit and managing the components of the business, such as sales and service. Apprentices are recruited from all over the country and employed in an appropriately located depot, where they are supervised and mentored throughout their training. At the time of the inspection, modern apprentices were employed in all 17 locations in England.

INSPECTION FINDINGS

3. The company produced its first self-assessment report in February 1999 for the inspection. The self-assessment process was carried out against the council's framework in *Raising the Standard*. All members of the company's training team were involved in the process and the views of apprentices, depot managers and the TEC were sought. The personnel manager and technical training officer were primarily responsible for producing the report. Inspectors agreed with many of the key strengths and weaknesses in the report. The company has provided an action plan to address the weaknesses. Inspectors agreed with the grades given in the self-assessment report for equal opportunities, the management of training and quality assurance. Inspectors found additional strengths in the occupational area and trainee support and awarded a higher grade than that given in the self-assessment report.

4. In April 1999, a team of four inspectors spent a total of 17 days inspecting the on- and off-the-job training at Lex Harvey. Inspectors interviewed all members of the Lex Harvey training team, the operations director and college managers. They visited a further education college and 10 depots across the country, where they interviewed 31 apprentices and workplace mentors and supervisors. They also met assessors, internal verifiers and representatives of Hertfordshire TEC. They examined assessment records, apprentices' files, portfolios and practical work, and numerous documents relating to the training and its management. Inspectors observed assessments and six on- and off-the-job training sessions. The following table shows the grades awarded for the training sessions observed by inspectors.

Grades awarded to instruction sessions

	GRADE 1	GRADE 2	GRADE 3	GRADE 4	GRADE 5	TOTAL
Engineering	1	2	3			6
Total	1	2	3	0	0	6

OCCUPATIONAL AREAS

Engineering

Grade 1

5. There are 53 engineering modern apprentices, all employed by Lex Harvey on a four-year apprenticeship, working on the maintenance and servicing of the company's lift-truck fleet. The apprentices are working towards achievement of NVQs at levels 2 and 3 in motor vehicle mechanical and electronic systems, together with key skills at level 3. Nearly all the training is carried out in the depots where the apprentices work. For two days a month, apprentices attend one of the company's three training centres for off-the-job training. In their first and second years, apprentices attend a further education college for six one-week blocks, to develop their knowledge of theory and key skills. Apprentices in their third or fourth year attend the college for one week to cover particular aspects of their key skills.

Inspectors agreed with the strengths and weaknesses identified by the company in their self-assessment report but they found additional strengths. Inspectors awarded a higher grade than that given in the self-assessment report.

STRENGTHS

- ◆ wide range of learning opportunities
- ◆ innovative training methods
- ◆ highly motivated trainees
- ◆ trainees' good record for punctuality and attendance
- ◆ apprentices' involvement in progress reviews
- ◆ rigorous work-based training
- ◆ celebration of outstanding performance by trainees
- ◆ trainees' high retention and achievement rates

WEAKNESSES

- ◆ lack of assessment by direct observation at some depots
- ◆ missed opportunities for identifying evidence of trainees' attainment in key skills

GOOD PRACTICE

In one depot, two trucks with transmission faults were in for repair. The mentor set the trucks side-by-side so that he and the apprentice could work on them simultaneously. The trainee was able to take responsibility for his work, while the mentor demonstrated and oversaw the work of his apprentice.

6. Apprentices are employed from the start of their training in one of the company's well-resourced depots. The variety of available tasks provides them with a wide range of learning opportunities and prepares them well for their future work in the industry. Trainees' work in the depots does not cover some of the requisite NVQ skills. The company makes arrangements, however, for other companies to provide the trainees with opportunities to develop these skills and have them assessed. The apprentices work closely with a mentor in the depots. The mentors provide a carefully planned and rigorously implemented on-the-job training programme. Apprentices are carefully monitored and supported by their mentor. A process of explanation, demonstration and assistance leads the apprentices to the point at which they can safely work on a job largely unsupervised. Some of the mentors have developed innovative methods for developing apprentices' skills rapidly. When carrying out some tasks, however, trainees focus exclusively on demonstrating vocational competencies. Opportunities for them to gather evidence of their attainment in key skills are missed. Apprentices are not treated any differently from any of the company's engineers in relation to quality control and a qualified engineer checks all the work they do.

7. The apprentices are enthusiastic and well motivated. Their attendance and punctuality record for both on- and off-the-job training is good. The company issues each apprentice with a comprehensive tool kit, safety equipment and corporate workwear. Apprentices are proud to be employed by the company and express very positive views of their experience as apprentices. Each apprentice keeps a daily diary of his work and records evidence of knowledge gained and progress made. Time is allowed each week for the mentor and apprentice to go through the diary and review progress. Time is set aside each week for the development of the apprentices' portfolios of evidence and these are produced to a high standard.

8. Work-based assessors in the depots carry out assessments and formally review the apprentices' progress every three months. Every six months, the reviews are attended by a technical trainer and internal verifier. However, in one case, the assessor was working across three depots and was not able to assess by direct observation, relying instead on the testimony of the mentor who had witnessed the apprentice carrying out the work. The apprentices are fully involved in their reviews and contribute to the short-term target setting agreed with their workplace supervisor. The reviews focus on progress towards achievement of the NVQ and apprentices progress at a pace dictated primarily by their ability. The apprentices and most of the workplace supervisors clearly understand the training programme and the NVQ requirements.

9. Off-the-job training takes place in one further education college offering excellent facilities, and in the company's own well equipped training centres. The training is well planned and training staff use a variety of methods to sustain the apprentices' interest. The company celebrates the efforts of apprentices in achieving their goals. Each year, the company holds an award ceremony for the apprentice of the year. The winner, who is judged against a range of performance criteria, including on- and off-the-job achievement, personal development and progress, is given £150, a cup to be displayed in the depot and a dinner with company managers. The award ceremony is well attended by apprentices, senior managers of the company and representatives of the Institute of Motor Industry, the college, and the TEC. The apprentices rarely fail to complete their training programme and their achievement rates are high. Over the last five years, only two of the 55 apprentices who started training, left the programme early. Those who complete their training achieve the NVQ at level 3. Last year, 96 per cent of the apprentices achieved NVQ at level 2 by the target date.

GENERIC AREAS

Equal opportunities

Grade 3

10. Lex Harvey has a clear commitment to the promotion of equality of opportunity. There is an extensive range of regularly updated policies and procedures covering all aspects of equal opportunities, including ethnicity, gender and disability and discriminatory behaviour such as sexual harassment and bullying. The company's grievance procedure is clear and well publicised. Inspectors agreed with the main strengths and weaknesses and with the grade given in the self-assessment report.

STRENGTHS

- ◆ effective staff development to heighten awareness of equal opportunities
- ◆ regularly reviewed, comprehensive policies on all aspects of equal opportunities

- ◆ emphasis on equal opportunities during apprentices' induction

WEAKNESSES

- ◆ under-representation of women and apprentices from minority ethnic backgrounds
- ◆ little promotion of equal opportunities in advertising and publicity material
- ◆ no monitoring of the effectiveness of the equal opportunities policy in the workplace

11. Although Lex Harvey specifies a minimum entry requirement in terms of GCSE grades, it does not necessarily exclude candidates who fail to meet this but are judged capable of being apprentices. The company has employed several apprentices who did not have the required entry grades, but who showed their suitability during initial testing and interview. Once in training, all apprentices undertake induction at the training centre and in their depots. As part of both these processes, the company's equal opportunities policy and its implications are explained. Most of the apprentices clearly recall this aspect of their induction and know how to raise a grievance under any of the separate policies covering equality of opportunity. However, there is little promotion or reinforcement of equal opportunities beyond the induction process.

12. Through a programme of staff development, members of the training team and all depot managers have undertaken training designed to raise their awareness of the issues associated with equal opportunities. Managers have been briefed on the impact of equal opportunities on recruitment and training within the company. General managers and assessors have undertaken training on equal opportunities with the Race Relations Employment Service. Although the company's equal opportunities policy is held at each depot and all staff are aware of it, there is no central monitoring to determine the extent to which its implementation in the depots is effective.

13. The company operates throughout the country and advertises in national and local newspapers. There is little reference to equal opportunities or its promotion in the company's publicity material. All applicants are invited for interview at a local depot. Data relating to the apprentices' ethnicity, gender and disability are collected. However, the data are not analysed or used to help determine policy on advertising and recruitment. Of the 53 engineering apprentices in training, none is female, and only one is from a minority ethnic background. The under-representation of women and apprentices from ethnic minority backgrounds has been recognised by the company.

Trainee support

Grade 1

14. Lex Harvey provides outstanding support for its apprentices. All applicants for apprenticeships are provided with clear information about the company, the industry, the structure of the training programme and what is expected of them. They are all interviewed and undergo an initial assessment of their basic skills in

numeracy, literacy and their mechanical aptitude. Once on the programme, all apprentices undertake comprehensive induction both into the company and into their depot. During training, the apprentices receive excellent help and guidance to ensure that they make maximum progress towards achieving vocational competence and derive as much benefit as possible from their training. Inspectors agreed with the strengths and weaknesses identified by the company in their self-assessment report, but awarded a higher grade for trainee support than that given in the report.

STRENGTHS

- ◆ comprehensive induction, remembered by most apprentices
- ◆ extensive additional learning support to meet trainees' identified needs
- ◆ encouragement given to trainees to progress to higher qualifications
- ◆ effectiveness of company staff as role models in terms of career progression
- ◆ employment of all apprentices from the start of training
- ◆ high level of pastoral support
- ◆ excellent opportunities for trainees to further their personal development

WEAKNESSES

- ◆ no initial assessment of key skills

15. Initial assessment of trainees helps training staff to identify any additional learning support needs that an apprentice may have. Where such needs are identified, the training team ensures that they are appropriately met. A need is sometimes met in house, but there are several examples of apprentices receiving help from specialists bought in by the company. The range of support available to the apprentices is extensive and the company prides itself on never having to dismiss an apprentice because of his or her inability to achieve. In cases where apprentices have been accepted without the required GCSE grades, the company funds their attendance at a further education college in order that they may retake the GCSE subjects in question, during the first year of their apprenticeship. The initial assessment does not include assessment of key skills. Following initial assessment, one of the training team's internal verifiers carries out a process of accreditation of the apprentices' prior learning and subsequently an individual training plan is agreed. The company updates the plan at each progress review, and is prepared to extend completion dates in order to allow an apprentice to benefit from additional learning support.

16. Apprentices are issued with a general induction pack which includes details of company structure, head office staff and contact telephone numbers. The structure of the modern apprenticeship and the content of the training programme are explained and documented. Assessment and review procedures are detailed, along with externally provided courses and facilities. The general induction is carried out at Lex Harvey's head quarters in Bedworth. On a rota basis, general managers and service managers provide the appropriate section of the induction. For example, personnel staff explain conditions of employment, and service managers explain

their vocationally specific sections. Each apprentice then undertakes an induction to the depot from which he or she will work. Induction cover all the main aspects of training and work, including health and safety, equal opportunities, site layout, emergency procedures, personnel, company amenities, and the complaints procedure. Many of the apprentices interviewed by inspectors remembered their induction and its contents well.

GOOD PRACTICE

Following the identification of an apprentice's special needs at initial assessment, the company employed a consultant educational psychologist to carry out a full assessment of the apprentice. From this assessment, an action plan was developed to provide the apprentice with appropriate support. The company has funded the necessary support throughout the apprenticeship. The apprentice's completion date has been set back several times as a result of his failure to demonstrate vocational competence. However, the apprentice has worked with company staff to develop his skills. He has made good progress and he is expected to complete his apprenticeship soon.

17. All apprentices are guaranteed a job on successful completion of their apprenticeship. The company has many examples of senior managers, depot managers and workshop supervisors who are former apprentices. Together with the operations director, also a former Lex Harvey engineer, these staff are pointed out at induction and trainees are told that they too may reasonably expect to attain a similar position in their future career with the company. The company encourages apprentices to progress even after completion of their apprenticeship and several have been funded by the company to go on to achieve higher educational qualifications. Apprentices are able to attend any training courses arranged for the company's engineers, and many benefit from manufacturers' update courses and new product courses during their apprenticeship.

18. All the staff at Lex Harvey are willing to provide pastoral support for the apprentices. In one case, an apprentice with personal problem was supported financially by the company, and company staff helped to resolve the problem. Apprentices express the view that they belong to Lex Harvey and some regard the company almost as a family. Apprentices are able to develop their personal skills through the events arranged by the company. All first-year apprentices attend a personal development programme. Many have been on an eight-day course in Derbyshire, during which they test and develop their team building and leadership skills. In April 1999, the first year apprentices took part in a seven-day development programme which involved sailing from Southampton to a port of the apprentices' choice. The apprentices learned a considerable amount about sailing, but also used the opportunity to gather evidence of their attainment in key skills.

Management of training**Grade 2**

19. All managers and staff have clear job descriptions and understand their roles and responsibilities well. Communications between managers and staff across all the company's locations are good. The managers and staff responsible for the Lex Harvey's training work well as a team and supplement the formal communication processes with frequent and effective informal communications. The company's personnel manager has overall responsibility for the management of training, but the technical training officer manages the training effectively in terms of the day-to-day operation. Two other full-time technical trainers and an administrator complete the team. The company has encouraged managers or workshop supervisors in the company's depots to qualify as NVQ assessors. They have been successful in helping 11 of the staff to become qualified and a further six to work towards an appropriate qualification in the twelve main depots and five customer service points at which apprentices were working at the time of inspection. Wherever appropriate, apprentices undertake their training in the workplace. Management of the training is

good. The training team works closely with the depot managers to ensure that the training programme is properly planned and links between on- and off-the-job training are strong. Inspectors agreed with the strengths and weaknesses identified by the company in the self-assessment report but found additional strengths and weaknesses. Inspectors agreed with the grade given in the report.

STRENGTHS

- ◆ close monitoring of on- and off-the-job training by managers
- ◆ clear, business and training targets, annually reviewed
- ◆ well-planned on- and off-the-job training
- ◆ frequently updated management information to assist decision making
- ◆ well-established staff appraisal and staff development processes

WEAKNESSES

- ◆ slow progress towards assessor qualifications by some staff
- ◆ poor management of change in staff deployment in one depot
- ◆ unresolved conflict between the demands of work at some depots and assessment

20. Managers and members of the training team frequently visit the apprentices in their workplace and at college as well as delivering some off-the-job training in one of the company's three training centres. The regular meeting and close co-operation between the training team, workplace managers and college staff helps the apprentices to see whole purpose and scope of their training programme. Both on- and off-the-job training are planned well in advance so that all parties know what will be required when. Where a depot is unable to provide trainees with suitable work for a particular aspect of the NVQ, arrangements are made well in advance for apprentices to carry out the work and acquire the competence elsewhere. Apprentices' individual training plans are up-dated after each review and they all have a clear schedule of assessment and intended completion dates for each unit of their NVQ. Trainees have a clear view of their current progress and the structure of their programmes. A well-established computerised management information system records the apprentices' progress following each assessment and review. Copies of the updated training plans are laminated and sent to the trainees and their workplace supervisor after each review. All the company's policies are held in each depot. They are also held on a central computer and networked to each depot, so that any changes are instantly made known throughout the company. At their monthly meetings, the training team has the benefit of extensive and up-to-date data from the information system when making decisions about the training programmes and how they should be carried out.

21. The personnel manager produces a detailed training plan, which forms part of the company's business planning process and is annually reviewed. Clear targets are set in the plan, in terms of staff training and performance, together with costs against budgets. The staff development needs are identified through a long-established and effective staff appraisal system. The company makes a strong

commitment to training. Previously, some depot managers allowed the demands of work to interfere with the apprentices' training. To overcome this problem, the company has made training managers and depot managers equal in status and work and training are now accorded equal priority. Suitable staff in each depot are encouraged to become assessors and those who do are financially rewarded. Nevertheless, in some depots, staff have been slow to achieve their assessor qualifications. Apprentices are no longer disadvantaged by the demands of the workplace. However, the pressure on staff to meet their performance targets and respond to the day-to-day requirements of the job, often at short notice, has meant that some assessors have not been able to assess apprentices at the most appropriate time, or by direct observation. In one depot, the assessor left and managers have been slow to find a member of staff to take on the assessor role.

Quality assurance

Grade 3

22. The Lex Harvey training team does not have a written quality assurance policy. The company has a policy relating to the quality assurance of its activities and, as the company prepares for the achievement of the Investors in People award, the training team is looking at developing a single approach to quality assurance. There are several effective strands of quality assurance for the apprenticeship-training scheme, and these fit within the company's framework of the ISO 9002 quality standard. Part of the work to produce a quality assurance policy in line with the company's policy, has been the move to develop a system of internal audit and review of existing policies. This development is at a very early stage. Inspectors agreed with the strengths and weaknesses identified by the training team in their self-assessment report but found additional strengths and weaknesses. Inspectors agreed with the grade given in the self-assessment report for this aspect of provision.

STRENGTHS

- ◆ frequent opportunities for trainees' to express their views formally
- ◆ detailed analysis of apprentices' response to questionnaires
- ◆ rapid action on issues raised by apprentices
- ◆ frequent checks on the quality of training by subcontractors and in workplaces
- ◆ close tracking of apprentices' performance against targets
- ◆ well-established monitoring of apprentices' retention rates and achievements

WEAKNESSES

- ◆ no written quality assurance policy
- ◆ no long-established arrangements for internal audit and review of procedures
- ◆ failure of internal verification process to focus on assessment in the workplace

23. Members of the training team at Lex Harvey are committed to the provision of high quality training. In recent years, the emphasis in checking the quality of

provision has been on the maintenance of high standards, rather than the continuous improvement of quality. Using the training team's computerised management information system, the performance of apprentices is closely monitored and accurately recorded. Any issue highlighted is addressed, but the data have not been analysed in terms of trends or as a means of assessing year-on-year improvement. Although the quality assurance system focuses on the quality of the training provision, it does not lead to its continuous improvement.

24. Apprentices have a good working relationship with their technical trainers and assessors and there are frequent opportunities for them to express their views and highlight any issues. The training team very rapidly addresses any issues raised by apprentices informally or through the review process. The views of all apprentices are sought annually through a questionnaire. Trainees' views are analysed and acted upon. As part of a project, one member of the training team has undertaken an extensive analysis of the apprentices' views of their training, and managers have raised the quality of the training by responding to the issues raised.

25. Members of the training team make regular visits to the depots and check on the quality of on-the-job training. When provision is to be subcontracted, such as that provided by a further education college, the subcontractor is required to provide evidence of their performance over recent years. Once chosen, the subcontractor is visited regularly by one of Lex Harvey's technical trainers, and the apprentices' views of the subcontractor's performance are formally sought and reviewed. Lex Harvey has four internal verifiers who meet regularly to review most aspects of the training programme. The internal verifier visits have been effective as a means of monitoring the provision and addressing issues identified. However, the internal verification system has not focused adequately on the standard of assessment in the workplace. The internal verifiers do not have a clear programme for the sampling of trainees' work or observation of assessment in the workplace. Occasionally, assessments of the apprentices' competence have been carried out by staff working towards qualification as assessors, and these have not been countersigned by a qualified assessor, even though they have been signed off by the internal verifier.