

# INSPECTION REPORT

## Martec Training

02 April 2002



ADULT LEARNING  
INSPECTORATE

## Grading

Inspectors use a seven-point scale to summarise their judgements about the quality of learning sessions. The descriptors for the seven grades are:

- *grade 1 - excellent*
- *grade 2 - very good*
- *grade 3 - good*
- *grade 4 - satisfactory*
- *grade 5 - unsatisfactory*
- *grade 6 - poor*
- *grade 7 - very poor.*

Inspectors use a five-point scale to summarise their judgements about the quality of provision in occupational/curriculum areas and in New Deal options. The same scale is used to describe the quality of leadership and management, which includes quality assurance and equality of opportunity. The descriptors for the five grades are:

- *grade 1 - outstanding*
- *grade 2 - good*
- *grade 3 - satisfactory*
- *grade 4 - unsatisfactory*
- *grade 5 - very weak.*

The two grading scales relate to each other as follows:

SEVEN-POINT SCALE	FIVE-POINT SCALE
grade 1	grade 1
grade 2	
grade 3	grade 2
grade 4	grade 3
grade 5	grade 4
grade 6	grade 5
grade 7	

## 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 training within the remit of a single inspectorate. The ALI is responsible for inspecting a wide range of government-funded learning, including:

- work-based training for all people over 16
- provision in further education colleges for people aged 19 and over
- the University for Industry's **learndirect** provision
- adult and community learning
- training given by the Employment Service under the New Deals.

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.

### Inadequate provision

A provider's provision will normally be deemed to be less than adequate where

- one third or more of published grades for occupational/curriculum areas and New Deal options are judged less than satisfactory, or
- leadership and management are judged to be less than satisfactory

The final decision as to whether the provision is inadequate rests with the Chief Inspector of Adult Learning. The overall judgement as to whether the provision is adequate or inadequate is included in the summary section of the inspection report.



## SUMMARY

### The provider

MARTEC Training is a private training provider based in Newcastle-under-Lyme, Staffordshire. It has one training centre which is also its head office. MARTEC offers work-based learning for young people, a Life Skills programme and a limited amount of provision for the Employment Service's New Deal programme. There are currently 14 foundation modern apprentices following engineering qualifications, 49 following National Vocational Qualifications NVO programmes in engineering and retailing and customer service, and 36 learners on the Life Skills programme. There are three clients following New Deal programmes.

### Overall judgement

The quality of the provision is adequate to meet the reasonable needs of those receiving it. A large majority of its learners are receiving satisfactory training. The leadership and management of MARTEC are satisfactory. Quality assurance and equal opportunities are also satisfactory. The programme areas of engineering and Life Skills are satisfactory but retailing and customer service is unsatisfactory.

### GRADES

Leadership and management	3
Contributory grades:	
Equality of opportunity	3
Quality assurance	3

Engineering, technology & manufacturing	3
Contributory grades:	
Work-based learning for young people	3

Retailing, customer service & transportation	4
Contributory grades:	
Work-based learning for young people	4

Foundation programmes	3
Contributory grades:	
Life Skills	3

## MARTEC TRAINING

### **KEY STRENGTHS**

- good staff development and appraisal system
- good promotion of equal opportunities in the training centre
- comprehensive evaluation processes
- open and consultative management style
- good levels of personal support
- flexible learning programmes

### **KEY WEAKNESSES**

- insufficient involvement of employers in training
- high turnover of assessors
- no equal opportunities monitoring in the workplace
- incomplete quality assurance procedures
- poor achievement rates in mainstream programmes

### **OTHER IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED**

- amalgamated quality assurance procedures
- more internal verifiers
- rationalised management information system
- more information for employers about NVQs

## THE INSPECTION

1. A team of five inspectors spent a total of 20 days at MARTEC Training (MARTEC) in April 2002. They interviewed 43 learners and 20 employers or supervisors. They carried out 21 interviews with members of MARTEC's staff. They visited 21 workplaces and observed seven learning sessions. They examined learners' portfolios, projects and personal files, staff files, and MARTEC's systems and procedures, as well as documents from the local Learning and Skills Council (LSC) and the awarding bodies. Inspectors also looked at MARTEC's self-assessment report, which was produced in January 2002 and updated in March 2002.

### Grades awarded to learning sessions

	Grade 1	Grade 2	Grade 3	Grade 4	Grade 5	Grade 6	Grade 7	Total
Engineering, technology & manufacturing	0	0	1	2	0	0	0	3
Foundation programmes	0	0	0	4	0	0	0	4
<b>Total</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>7</b>

## THE PROVIDER AS A WHOLE

### Context

2. MARTEC was established in 1982 to provide training for learners in the motor industry. It continues to focus on this area, offering foundation modern apprenticeships and NVQs in motor vehicle engineering, body repair and refinishing, retail parts supply and car valeting. It also offers training in customer service and business administration to the motor industry. In 2000, MARTEC introduced a Life Skills programme. MARTEC provides work-based learning for 99 learners, and has work placement arrangements with 53 employers, most of them in the Newcastle-under-Lyme and Stoke-on-Trent areas. Work-based learning in business administration, and New Deal provision were not inspected because the numbers of learners on these programmes were small.

3. MARTEC has 14 staff. All its training takes place either in the training centre or at learners' workplaces. Funding for work-based learning and the Life Skills programme is provided by Staffordshire LSC, and for New Deal by the Employment Service. MARTEC holds the Investors in People award, a national standard for improving an organisation's performance through its people. It also holds ISO 9002, an international quality assurance standard.

4. The Newcastle-under-Lyme and Stoke-on-Trent areas are noted for their pottery and ceramics industry. This has been in decline for a number of years, as has coal mining, which was another major area of employment. Hi-tech communications, call centres and retail developments are all growth sectors in the area. In October 2001, the unemployment rate for Newcastle-under-Lyme was 3 per cent, and for Stoke-on-Trent it was 3.9 per cent, compared with the national average of 2.9 per cent. At the 1991 census, 1.1 per cent of the population of Newcastle-under-Lyme and 3.1 per cent of the population of Stoke-on-Trent were from minority ethnic groups. This compares with a national average of 6.2 per cent. The proportion of young people achieving five or more general certificates of secondary education (GCSEs) at grade C or above in 2001 was 44 per cent in Newcastle-under-Lyme and 36 per cent in Stoke-on-Trent, compared with a national average of 47.9 per cent.



### **Work-based learning for young people**

5. Work-based learning in engineering is satisfactory. Learners receive regular visits from MARTEC staff and the opportunity either to attend training sessions in the training centre, or for MARTEC staff to give them individual training in the workplace. Training by MARTEC in the workplace is not always well planned, and neither are NVQ assessments. Inspectors saw good examples of NVQ portfolios with a diverse range of well-presented evidence. Learners have the opportunity to choose a range of qualifications in the engineering occupational area, although they are given limited information on further progression. Achievement rates are poor with learners making slow progress towards their qualifications, and there have been some delays in internal verification.

6. Training in the retailing, customer service and transportation area of learning is unsatisfactory, with poor rates of achievement. Some learners are on inappropriate programmes. Learners' retention rates are improving. Learners in this occupational area receive innovative and flexible health and safety training. Reviews of learners' progress are not always focused and are not used to set specific targets.

### **Life Skills**

7. MARTEC's Life Skills training provides an effective personal development programme which enhances learners' self-esteem. Learners are given good personal support, which they value highly. There are appropriate learning resources, and learners undertake a range of projects to increase their skills. Learners are not always set specific, challenging targets. Activities are not always planned effectively to give learners the best opportunities for progress. Basic skills training is not sufficiently integrated with the rest of the training.

## LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

Grade 3

8. MARTEC Training is based in Newcastle-under-Lyme in Staffordshire. The organisation is led by two directors, supported by a general manager and a Life Skills manager. The directors oversee facilities, finance, quality assurance, induction and administration. The office manager, who has specific responsibility for maintaining the management information system, and the business student administrator, report to the directors. MARTEC is organised into two programme areas, mainstream and Life Skills. The general manager has responsibility for mainstream training but also manages all aspects of training and is the internal verifier for all vocational programmes. There are five qualified, work-based assessors and two newly appointed assessors are being trained. The Life Skills manager, three supervisor/tutors and a Life Skills assistant, work specifically on the Life Skills programme. There is a welfare placement officer who supports learners with welfare issues, promotes MARTEC to employers, and secures suitable work placements for learners. MARTEC has an equal opportunities policy which is reviewed annually and a quality assurance policy. It holds ISO 9002, an international quality assurance standard. In July 2000, it achieved the Investors in People award, a national standard for improving an organisation's performance through its people. MARTEC Training does not subcontract any of its training provision. The company has work-placement agreements with all its 53 work-placement providers. MARTEC has produced three self-assessment reports. The most recent, written in January 2002, was updated in March 2002, in preparation for the inspection.

### STRENGTHS

- good business plan development
- open and consultative management style
- highly effective internal communication
- good staff development and appraisal system
- active approach to attracting under-represented groups
- good promotion of equal opportunities in the training centre
- comprehensive evaluation processes

### WEAKNESSES

- insufficient involvement of employers in training
- inadequate use of performance data
- high turnover of assessors
- no equal opportunities monitoring in the workplace
- incomplete quality assurance procedures

## OTHER IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED

- rationalised management information system
- better recording and monitoring of action points in the minutes of meetings
- better monitoring of key objectives in the business plan
- further development of equal opportunities policy
- centralised complaints system
- more internal verifiers
- amalgamated quality assurance and management procedures

9. MARTEC has effective procedures for the development of its business plan, a strength not recognised in the self-assessment report. Evaluation reports are collected from managers and analysed to provide information for planning. A detailed business plan is produced each year. It includes clear aims and objectives which refer specifically to learners and training. The business plan incorporates a detailed development plan describing how key objectives will be achieved and who is responsible, and giving clear deadlines for completion. Staff at all levels in the organisation contribute, and are committed to, the business plan. Staff development plans are also produced with reference to the business plan. However, key objectives are not monitored in a systematic way by managers and staff. Progress against the targets set by the local LSC is reviewed at monthly staff meetings.

10. MARTEC's managers are committed to involving their staff fully in decision-making. Staff have been consulted about the introduction of the Life Skills programme, the decision to move premises to the current site, the design of the training areas, development of courses and marketing strategies. This was identified in the self-assessment report. Managers welcome suggestions by staff to improve training. Staff contribute fully to self-assessment and business planning, and draft policies are reviewed at a full staff meeting before being implemented.

11. Communication between staff at all levels is good, a strength recognised in the self-assessment report. Staff are kept fully informed about all aspects of the organisation. Staff meetings are held regularly and the directors attend them. There are also regular meetings of directors and senior managers. The schedule of meetings helps in the development of a strong team approach. Working in close proximity to each other ensures constant informal discussions between assessors, managers and directors. Assessors from each area of learning meet to plan and discuss operational issues, review progress against targets and resolve any problems. Minutes of meetings are taken but they do not contain agreed action points or deadlines to enable progress to be monitored. MARTEC has developed external links with the careers service, local schools, community organisations and the local LSC.

12. MARTEC strongly encourages professional development, and there is an annual budget for staff training. Staff have quarterly reviews and an annual appraisal. Staff development is clearly linked to business priorities, and staff are encouraged to consider

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their personal development needs together with more job-focused training. New staff receive a thorough induction covering terms and conditions, equal opportunities and health and safety. All staff have a detailed job description and are encouraged to maintain their occupational competence in line with the requirements of their national training organisation. Staff are taking a range of courses including first-aid, key skills deliverers and practitioners awards, basic skills teaching awards, training and development units, IT upgrading and various evening classes. The self-assessment report did not fully recognise professional development as a key strength.

13. MARTEC does not involve employers sufficiently in the training process. This weakness was identified in the self-assessment report. Employers are not given enough information about training. They do not know when assessment visits will take place, nor do they receive regular reports on learners' progress. They have a poor understanding of the training programmes and are not involved in learner's progress reviews. They do not take part in joint planning with assessors and trainers, and often they have no idea how far learners have got in their training programme. There is poor planning of on- and off-the-job training. Learners' progress is slow.

14. MARTEC has recently introduced a second management information system which has greatly improved the quality of data available. Managers can now obtain data on learners starting and completing programmes, early leavers, progress toward awards, and levels of qualification. The data can be analysed for gender, ethnicity and disability. However, this information is not being fully used by managers. There are no formal annual targets for retention and achievement rates in occupational areas. Analysis is focused primarily on how well LSC targets are being met. The use of two management information systems is not efficient. There is a great deal of duplication, and potential for inaccuracies in the data.

15. There is a high turnover rate of assessors. This is having a negative effect on learners' progress, but was not identified as a weakness in the self-assessment report. There is evidence that lack of continuity has led to missed assessments, interrupted training and delayed reviews. Some individual learning plans indicate that learners have had several different assessors in a short period of time. MARTEC does not have contingency arrangements to ensure that learners' progress is not adversely affected during periods of high staff turnover. Two new assessors have recently been recruited, but it will take time to fully integrate them into the assessment team.

**Equality of opportunity****Contributory grade 3**

16. MARTEC has an equal opportunities policy and a dedicated member of staff is responsible for equality of opportunity within the organisation. Most of the training offered is in engineering and the motor trade, areas which are traditionally dominated by men, and tend not to attract learners from minority ethnic groups. MARTEC actively encourages learners from under-represented groups to join its training programmes. MARTEC's promotional literature contains a statement of its commitment to equality of opportunity. Leaflets and advertisements are designed to attract applications from under-represented groups and include images which combat stereotyping. MARTEC staff have taken advice from key organisations such as the careers service, the Employment Service and local community groups on widening participation. A garage manager from a minority ethnic group was asked for advice on increasing participation by learners from ethnic minorities. As a result, the organisation's promotional literature is now circulated to local mosques. This was partly recognised in the self-assessment report. MARTEC systematically gathers data on equal opportunities from staff and learners' applications. These data are analysed and monitored, and used to focus future recruitment initiatives.

17. There is good promotion of equal opportunities within the training centre. The equal opportunities policy is a statement of intent, and covers staff and learners but it is insufficiently detailed and does not include procedures for implementation. There is a comprehensive policy on bullying. Both policies are on display in several places around the training centre. One learner produced an easy-to-understand document about bullying and harassment, detailing what it is and how to deal with it. His work was laminated and displayed in the training centre for the benefit of all learners. MARTEC produces a monthly bulletin for learners, employers and staff. It regularly features equal opportunities, exploring current issues and providing updates on legislation. It also reminds people who to contact if there are any equal opportunities problems. Learners are given a copy of the learners' charter at induction. This promises protection against discrimination during the learning programme. Equal opportunities is discussed by staff at monthly team meetings, and documented by the equal opportunities co-ordinator, who reports back to all staff.

18. MARTEC does not monitor equal opportunities in the learners' workplaces. Equal opportunities is explained at the beginning of the learning programme but there is no reinforcement or monitoring at learners' progress reviews. MARTEC staff who visit learners in their work placement keep a record of issues or complaints arising, and any action taken. However, this system is not centralised and there is no systematic way of ensuring that complaints are properly investigated or satisfactorily concluded. Some learners and employers have a poor understanding of equal opportunities. Employers are given a copy of MARTEC's equal opportunities policy, but those interviewed had no recollection of its content. Before a learner is placed with an employer, an initial check is carried out, which includes ensuring that the employer has an equal opportunities policy. However, inspectors found that some employers did not have any equal opportunities policies even though they had passed the initial check. This weakness was not identified in the self-assessment report.

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19. MARTEC's training centre is situated within easy reach of Newcastle-under-Lyme town centre in a two-storey building. A recent survey identified the improvements required to provide access for people with disabilities. A ramp has been installed at the front entrance to allow wheelchair access, and there are plans for a handrail and other adaptations to allow learners with physical disabilities access to the ground floor.

**Quality assurance****Contributory grade 3**

20. MARTEC has a quality assurance system accredited to the ISO 9002 standard, which is reviewed annually by an external consultant. However, this system was designed for industry, and does not cover all the activities of training organisations. MARTEC has designed its own procedures and flowcharts to cover some additional activities, but these are not co-ordinated with the ISO 9002 procedures. One of the organisation's directors is responsible for quality assurance, and makes any necessary amendments to the system. All staff are made fully aware of the system at their induction, and know how to recommend changes to it. It is monitored and updated regularly. There is an internal audit system, and three members of staff are qualified internal quality assurance auditors. There is an annual audit schedule, with each auditor's responsibilities identified. There is no procedure for gathering feedback from learners and employers, or for the accreditation of prior learning. Learners are entered for key skills examinations from which they would have been exempted if their previous qualifications had been taken into account.

21. Feedback is gathered from learners at three stages of their training programme. The learners complete an induction questionnaire when their assessor first visits them in the workplace. They complete another when the internal verifier visits them approximately half-way through their training programme. An exit questionnaire is issued to all learners when they leave the programme, but there have been few responses to these. All the feedback is analysed, and inspectors saw examples of improvements that had been made as a result. An assessor was replaced following negative feedback on the mid-term review from learners. MARTEC has encouraged formal feedback by questionnaire both from staff and employers, but with limited success. There is annual evaluation of data on early leavers, programme area performance, recruitment of learners and equal opportunities. All evaluation is detailed, and it is used to plan future developments. MARTEC also analyses and evaluates how well it is achieving the targets on its business plan.

22. There is a comprehensive internal verification system. The general manager is the internal verifier for all programme areas. The internal verification policy includes set objectives and an annual sampling plan. An internal verification report is produced, which records completed internal verification activity. The internal verifier observes NVO assessors in the workplace, and direct training both in the workplace and in the training centre. These observations are carried out at least once a year, and a feedback sheet is completed and discussed by all parties. Assessors meet regularly. The assessors and the internal verifier attend training updates given by external bodies. Assessment plans are in all learners' portfolios and are completed regularly. A variety of assessment methods are used. All recent programme reports from the external verifier are satisfactory, with the exception of retailing and customer service where action points were identified and prompt action was taken to resolve the problems. Currently, all assessment decisions are being sampled. MARTEC employs two qualified internal verifiers but only one is active. There are delays in the verification of portfolios.

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23. The self-assessment process included all staff. Learners' views were taken into consideration, and the first draft of the self-assessment report was circulated to all staff for comment. A development plan was produced following the identification of strengths and weaknesses. This is well presented, and includes measurable objectives and timescales. Some objectives have been achieved within the target time. Inspectors found similar strengths and weaknesses to those identified in engineering. In Life Skills and in retailing, customer service and transport, most strengths and weaknesses found by inspectors had not been identified by MARTEC. Some strengths identified by MARTEC in leadership and management were also found by inspectors, but others were considered to be no more than normal practice. Most of the weaknesses in leadership and management had not been identified by MARTEC. Most self-assessment grades were the same as those awarded by inspectors. In one area inspectors awarded a lower grade.

### Good Practice

*Following telephone enquires from parents, MARTEC took the decision, in consultation with all staff, to arrange open evenings. In November 2001, a very successful open evening was held for both mainstream and Life Skills learners. The parents and guardians of 42 per cent of learners attended. They all found it informative and helpful in their understanding of NVQs and their sons' and daughters' progress. A full evaluation was carried out by MARTEC to help in the planning of a similar event for June 2002.*



## AREAS OF LEARNING

Engineering, technology & manufacturing

Grade 3

Programmes inspected	Number of learners	Contributory grade
Work-based learning for young people	51	3

24. MARTEC Training provides work-based learning for 51 young people in vehicle maintenance, vehicle body repair, vehicle refinishing, vehicle valeting and vehicle fast fit operations. Thirteen are foundation modern apprentices and 38 are on NVQ programmes. There is also one New Deal client on a vehicle valeting programme. Learners are recruited directly by MARTEC through the careers service or local advertising. Sometimes they are recruited directly by employers and referred to MARTEC for training and assessment. Learners are initially assessed for their basic numeracy and literacy skills. Additional numeracy or literacy support is arranged with MARTEC's support tutors. All learners have initial induction training for half a day before they are placed with local employers from the motor industry. The induction covers essential health and safety, equality of opportunity and NVQ awareness training. All learners are assessed at work by MARTEC staff, who visit them every four weeks. They are given one-to-one training by a MARTEC trainer/assessor. Most of the trainer/assessors are qualified to assess NVQ evidence. Two new staff are working towards the NVQ assessors awards. All staff are experienced and well qualified in motor vehicle-related studies. Learners are encouraged to attend the MARTEC training centre every four weeks to gain additional background knowledge, key skills training and help with NVQ portfolio-building. A computer based training package is used for the background knowledge requirements of the NVQ programmes. Learners have a progress review every 13 weeks, carried out by MARTEC staff.

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

Work-based learning for young people																	
Foundation modern apprenticeships (FMA)	2001-02		2000-01		1999-2000		1998-99										
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	
	Number of starts	3		10		7		6									
Retained*	0		0		5		4										
Successfully completed	0		0		0		0										
Still in learning	3		4		3		3										

\*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

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Work-based learning for young people																
NVQ Training																
	2001-02		2000-01		1999-2000		1998-99		1997-98							
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Number of starts	12		31		37		29		13							
Retained*	0		22		20		9	31	10	77						
Successfully completed	0		3		9		9	31	10	77						
Still in learning	9		15		14		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

### STRENGTHS

- flexible training arrangements
- regular and frequent contact between learners and assessors
- good NVQ portfolios
- good range of training programmes

### WEAKNESSES

- poor achievement rates
- some delays in internal verification
- insufficient involvement of employers in training

### OTHER IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED

- more information for learners about career progression options
- better briefing of employers about NVQ requirements
- broader initial assessment of learners

25. MARTEC has flexible arrangements for training, providing a range of teaching styles to meet learners' needs and preferences. This strength was identified in the self-assessment report. Most learners attend monthly training sessions at MARTEC's training centre, where they are given background knowledge for the NVQ as well as key skills training and help with portfolio-building. They are also visited at work every month for

one-to-one training and assessment. If learners are unable to attend the training centre, MARTEC tutors provide the same training for them in their workplace, using a CD-ROM learning package. There is additional support for those learners identified as needing it. MARTEC's training resources are adequate.

26. All learners are visited at their workplace by a trainer/assessor every four weeks. Most learners also attend the training centre every four weeks. This means that learners have personal contact with their trainer/assessor at least once a month, and in most cases, every two weeks. They are also encouraged to contact MARTEC staff at any time if they need help or guidance. NVQ assessments are carried out regularly by the trainer/assessor. Learners are given written feedback after each assessment.

27. Learners' NVQ portfolios are well organised, clearly indexed and contain evidence that is very well prepared and presented. A range of different assessment methods are used. The portfolios all contain several pieces of photographic evidence of the learners carrying out tasks in their workplace, with written descriptions of the work being undertaken. Evidence in the portfolios is well indexed and easy to follow.

28. MARTEC offers a range of motor vehicle programmes, suitable for different ability levels. Learners can gain qualifications in light or heavy vehicle mechanical repair, vehicle body repair, vehicle refinishing, vehicle valeting, fast fit mechanical vehicle repairs, motor cycle repair and vehicle electrical repairs. MARTEC uses two national training organisations and three different awarding bodies to provide a good range of qualifications.

29. The achievement rates of learners on motor vehicle programmes are poor. This weakness was identified in the self-assessment report. Half of all the foundation modern apprentices so far recruited are still in training. Some have been on the programme since 1998, and their rate of achievement is slow. The only advanced modern apprentice left the programme early. No one has achieved all the requirements of the modern apprenticeship framework. In 1997-98, 77 per cent of NVQ learners achieved their qualification. However, since the introduction of a new award, the proportion has fallen each year. In 1998-99, it was 31 per cent, in 1999-2000, 24 per cent and in 2000-01, 10 per cent. MARTEC has identified an increase in the number of NVQs gained by learners on motor vehicle programmes this year. However, this does not take into account the number of learners or the time taken to achieve the qualification.

30. MARTEC's internal verification process is slow. Some learners have had to wait several months to have their NVQ portfolios of evidence internally verified. Some have had their achievement of qualifications delayed. On at least one occasion, evidence has been lost by MARTEC and learners have had to repeat work.

31. Training in the workplace is planned poorly, and not linked with off-the-job training. There is little attempt to organise learners' work so that they can gain evidence for their NVQs, and no formal communication with employers about what learners are doing at the training centre. Employers are not told at the start of the programme what kind of

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evidence their learners will need to obtain. MARTEC does not give employers enough information about learners' progress. Learners have regular progress reviews, but employers have little involvement in these. This weakness in communication was identified in the self-assessment report.

32. Learners and their employers are not informed in a planned way about possible opportunities to enhance the level of their qualifications. Some learners have made good progress on their courses and completed NVQs at level 2. In some cases, they could transfer to a foundation modern apprenticeship. The apprenticeship qualification would be at a higher level and would not involve too much additional work for the learner. The key skills awards involved would enhance the learning.

33. Employers act as witnesses for learners' NVQ evidence. Sample signatures are collected to enable assessors and verifiers to confirm the validity of the signatures. However, MARTEC does not ensure that witnesses fully understand their role or know how to assess learners' competence.

34. Learners' initial assessment consists mainly of tests of their basic level of numeracy and literacy. Their mechanical aptitude, understanding and awareness is not tested. Learners are not fully assessed to ensure that they are on the right programmes, or identify any areas for additional development.

### Good Practice

*Assessors are provided with a digital camera, and use it to capture evidence of learners in their workplace for NVQ assessments. The photographs are used together with a written explanation of the task in the learners' NVQ portfolio of evidence.*

## Retailing, customer service &amp; transportation

Grade 4

Programmes inspected	Number of learners	Contributory grade
Work-based learning for young people	11	4

35. There are nine young people on work-based learning in retailing and customer service and two New Deal clients. Eight learners are undertaking retail operations NVQs at level 2 and one is working for an NVQ in customer service at level 2. No contributory grade has been awarded for New Deal as there are too few clients. Learners are recruited through the careers service, the Employment Service and directly by MARTEC. Learners attend the programme for a maximum of 40 hours per week. All learners are in work placements. Off-the-job training at MARTEC takes place monthly. Learners have a monthly assessment visit in their workplace. Induction takes place at the training centre and in the workplace. A range of topics is included, such as equal opportunities, complaints procedures, health and safety and course content. Most learners attend the programme for nine to 12 months, but some continue past that date in order to complete their qualification.

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

Work-based learning for young people																
Foundation modern apprenticeships (FMA)	2001-02		2000-01		1999-2000		1998-99									
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
	Number of starts	1		3		4		7								
Retained*	0		0		2	50	3	43								
Successfully completed	0		0		0	0	1	14								
Still in learning	0		0		1	25	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

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Work-based learning for young people																
NVQ Training																
	2001-02		2000-01		1999-2000		1998-99		1997-98							
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Number of starts	4		6		8		7		3							
Retained*	0		5		2		4	57	3	100						
Successfully completed	0		1		1		4	57	3	100						
Still in learning	3		4		1		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

### STRENGTHS

- improved numbers remaining in learning
- innovative and flexible approach to health and safety training

### WEAKNESSES

- poor achievement rates
- ineffective reviews of learners
- inappropriate programmes for some learners

### OTHER IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED

- more employer involvement in NVQ process
- better reinforcement of complaints and appeals procedures

36. Fewer learners are leaving before the end of their programme. In 1999-2000, the retention rate was 25 per cent for learners on the NVQ programme. Of the 10 learners who joined the NVQ programme since 2000-01, seven are still in learning. This was not recognised in the self-assessment report.

37. There is an innovative and flexible approach to health and safety training. Learners are motivated by using computers to develop their health and safety knowledge. Training can take place in the classroom or the workplace. Learners work at their own pace, and carry out a range of activities to reinforce learning. A CD-ROM is used which

allows learners to choose the best learning method for them. They can choose to read or listen to the presentation. Learners' interest is maintained by the varied methods of explanation, which include diagrams and video clips. Learners have a good knowledge of health and safety. It is covered in depth at induction. Learners' knowledge and understanding of the subject is checked regularly and thoroughly throughout the programme at their reviews, during assessment and through the various NVQ projects and assessments.

38. The achievement rate is poor. In 1998-99, 57 per cent of NVQ learners successfully completed their work-based learning programme, and in 1999-2000, the proportion was 12.5 per cent. In 2000-01, the proportion was 17 per cent, and so far no one has achieved this in 2001-02. Targets are set on the individual learning plan for achievement of NVQ units. In some cases, the first target is set some six to eight months into the programme. Learners often fail to achieve the targets and the dates are amended. Many learners have not completed any units despite being on the programme for some time. Learners' portfolios contain a range of evidence including photographs, witness testimonies and candidate logs. However, there is insufficient evidence to reflect the time learners have been on the programme. This weakness was not recognised in the self-assessment report. MARTEC has recently developed a new action-planning document for learners, giving further details about what is to be achieved and how. This was the result of an external verifier's report that highlighted the slow progress of learners and the inadequacy of action-planning.

39. Reviews are not used to set clear, measurable targets. Targets are general. They do not break down learning into small steps to encourage learners' progress. Learners are not motivated or challenged by the targets set. Many learners are unaware of the purpose of their progress review, and are unable to distinguish between the review and written assessment feedback. They do not know what they have achieved or what they need to do next. Learners are visited in their workplace by assessors once each month. There is little extra support for learners with additional learning needs. Some employers provide their own company training, but there is no formal link between this and the training and assessment provided by MARTEC. Some learners do not attend off-the-job training, and some who do have missed several sessions. There has been a high turnover of assessors that has led to delays in assessment of up to three months.

40. Some learners are following inappropriate programmes. Initial assessment consists of a basic skills assessment. There is no learning style assessment. The basic skills assessment identifies the support learners need, but this is not used to plan the learning programme, and learners are not routinely offered basic skills support. There is little basic skills training and most of what takes place is unplanned. Some learners are inappropriately placed on NVQ programmes when a foundation modern apprenticeship would be more suitable. Employers have a basic knowledge of the NVQ process but are unaware of the detail of the qualification. Learners have a good recollection of their health and safety training. There is insufficient reinforcement of other key induction topics such as the complaints and appeals procedures.

Foundation programmes

Grade 3

Programmes inspected	Number of learners	Contributory grade
Life Skills	36	3

41. There are 36 learners receiving training in Life Skills as part of the Learning Gateway. MARTEC started Life Skills training in 2000. There are two programmes for young people aged between 16 and 19. One is based at MARTEC’s centre in Newcastle-under-Lyme. The second is a community project based on a local housing estate. Other projects are occasionally undertaken. The programmes can last for up to a year, but the average length is 16 weeks. Learners attend for 16 hours a week, usually over three days, and up to 40 hours a week when on work placement. They join the programmes with little prior achievement. They are referred by the careers service, and interviewed as part of the initial assessment process. Their personal development and individual learning needs are identified by the careers service. The programmes have been devised to prepare learners to progress into employment or training. They include training in literacy, numeracy, practical skills, food hygiene, confidence building and social skills. Some additional training is given in conjunction with external agencies. Learners work towards individual targets agreed after their induction. There are two full-time and three part-time training staff.

The following table shows the achievement and retention rates available up to the time of the inspection.

Work-based learning for young people																	
Life Skills	2001-02		2000-01		1999-2000												
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	
	Number of starts	45		67		24											
Retained*	9		38		15	62											
Successfully completed	9		37		15	62											
Still in learning	29		7		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



**STRENGTHS**

- wide range of activities
- effective personal development programme
- good levels of personal support
- good learning resources

**WEAKNESSES**

- inadequate target-setting
- ineffective planning of programme
- insufficient development of basic skills

**OTHER IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED**

- more opportunity for learners to gain external accreditation
- more formal collection of learners' views

42. Learners on Life Skills programmes are offered a wide range of activities. This was recognised as a strength in the self-assessment report. Practical activities include sessions in the workshop and work in MARTEC's canteen. Learners use computers to produce curriculum vitae and job application letters. Trips, games and quizzes are used for team building. A programme to help young people learn to drive, and introduce them to car maintenance, is run in partnership with the local YMCA. MARTEC runs sessions on substance misuse jointly with the local police and a drug awareness group. The programmes are relatively new and have been evaluated and adapted. For example, the size of groups was reduced to allow more individual support to be given, and there has been an increase in the number and range of practical activities.

43. MARTEC's Life Skills programmes are effective in developing learners' self-esteem and practical skills. This was identified as a strength in the self-assessment report. The local community programme involves the renovation of a derelict house and the improvement of gardens on a housing estate. Learners develop skills in building crafts and gardening, and this increases their confidence. Eight learners from the training centre programme are replacing a fence at a miniature railway in a local park that had been vandalised. These real-life projects are giving learners the opportunity to produce something for their communities, which they are justifiably proud of. The programmes stress the importance of regular and punctual attendance. This is a major achievement

## MARTEC TRAINING

for those who had poor attendance records at school. The jobsearch elements of the programmes are designed to give learners the skills to gain a work placement. At the time of the inspection, four learners had work placements. Although learners do not work towards external qualifications, they do gain in-house certificates when they reach milestones. For many learners, these are the first certificates that they have achieved. There is no external accreditation for work done in literacy, numeracy and personal development. Learners do not collect evidence of the practical skills which they are developing for potential NVQ accreditation. One learner has successfully gone on to achieve an NVQ at level 2 in retailing after completing the Life Skills programme, and gained permanent employment.

44. MARTEC offers good personal support to learners and this was recognised as a strength in the self-assessment report. Many of the learners are disadvantaged young people who lack the skills and confidence to move into mainstream training. Their problems may include homelessness, misuse of drugs, alcohol abuse and repeat offending. Staff work very closely with the learners and give high levels of pastoral support. MARTEC has reduced the size of groups so that learners can be given more individual support. Learners have access to their personal advisers when they need it. Learners on work placements are visited at least once a week by MARTEC staff. MARTEC staff respond to learners' comments, but they do not have a formal method for collecting learners' views. Learners are asked to comment on their experience of training when they leave. They are not asked any specific questions and their answers are not collated or evaluated.

45. A good range of learning resources has been developed to support the training programmes. This was recognised as a strength in the self-assessment report. The training centre itself is used as a learning resource, with skills developed in the canteen, training rooms and outside areas. The training centre has a number of large teaching rooms, workshops to deliver practical skills and a garden and greenhouse area. The basic skills sessions are taught in rooms with computers, so that learners can be helped to produce written work. There is a good range of learning resources to support basic skills development. Jobsearch sessions use real job advertisements and letters of application. Staffing ratios are high, generally one member of staff to five or six learners.

46. Learners are set insufficiently individual targets. Most are working towards the same milestones regardless of their needs. The targets themselves are too general. For example, the target might be to increase confidence, but there is no indication of how this is to be achieved. Learners' progress reviews record what has happened since the last review, but do not identify what learners need to do to improve. There are no timescales set for the achievement of targets. Learners are not always aware of the milestones that they are working towards. They are not told how to develop the skills needed to achieve their targets. Learners' work is kept in a number of different files and not brought together for use in reviews.

47. MARTEC provides no overall scheme of work for the Life Skills programmes. It is not clear how each week's training is designed, or how the elements fit together.

Elements are delivered in isolation, and this leads to confusion for learners. This lack of coherence means that learners do not have the opportunity to practise what they have learnt. It also means that they are sometimes asked to repeat elements. Lesson plans concentrate on group activities. They do not indicate how each individual's needs are going to be met. There is too little planned formal training on work placements. Learners do make progress but they do not know what skills they will be learning next, and find it difficult to recall what they have already learnt.

48. Staff have attended some basic skills training, including courses on the new adult literacy and numeracy core curriculum. They have limited experience of teaching literacy or numeracy, and no specialist basic skills teaching qualifications. There is no detailed diagnostic assessment of learners' basic skills needs. MARTEC does not identify which particular skills need to be developed. Basic skills training and support is mostly limited to specific sessions and is not an integral part of other activities. The lack of integration means that learners do not recognise the importance of literacy and numeracy in helping them to progress into further training or employment. Learners' portfolios show some examples of poor marking with basic spelling and punctuation errors left uncorrected.

#### Good Practice

*The walls of the centre are used extensively to celebrate the achievement of learners. There are photographs of activities, examples of learners' work, and certificates of achievement displayed throughout the centre.*