

INSPECTION REPORT

Milltech Limited

03 September, 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 Jobcentre Plus programmes. 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
- **learnirect** provision
- Adult and Community Learning
- training funded by Jobcentre Plus
- education and training in prisons, at the invitation of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Prisons.

Inspections are carried out in accordance with the *Common Inspection Framework* by teams of full-time inspectors and part-time associate inspectors who have knowledge of, and experience in, the work which they inspect. All providers are invited to nominate a senior member of their staff to participate in the inspection as a team member.

Overall judgement

In those cases where the overall judgement is that the provision is adequate, only those aspects of the provision which are less than satisfactory will be reinspected.

Provision will normally be deemed to be inadequate where:

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

This provision will be subject to a full reinspection.

The final decision as to whether the provision is inadequate rests with the Chief Inspector of Adult Learning. A statement as to whether the provision is adequate or not is included in the summary section of the inspection report.

SUMMARY

The provider

Milltech Limited is a private limited company which offers work-based learning for young people in engineering, technology and manufacturing, business administration, management and professional, and retailing, customer service and transportation. There is one training centre for the off-the-job training in Sunderland. There are 172 learners.

Overall judgement

The overall quality of the provision is not adequate to meet the reasonable needs of those receiving it. More specifically, the quality of work-based learning in each occupational area is unsatisfactory. The quality of leadership and management is unsatisfactory, as are the arrangements for quality assurance. Equality of opportunity is good.

GRADES

Leadership and management	4
Contributory grades:	
Equality of opportunity	2
Quality assurance	4

Engineering, technology & manufacturing	4
Contributory grades:	
Work-based learning for young people	4

Business administration, management & professional	4
Contributory grades:	
Work-based learning for young people	4

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

KEY STRENGTHS

- good equal opportunities practice
- good use of feedback for continuous improvement
- thorough internal verification process
- good learner support

KEY WEAKNESSES

- poor retention and achievement rates
- poor monitoring of training
- insufficient management of assessment
- inadequate monitoring of work placements

THE INSPECTION

1. Five inspectors spent a total of 20 days at Milltech Limited (Milltech) in September 2002. They interviewed 43 learners, carried out 27 interviews with members of staff, visited 35 employers and interviewed 25 employers and workplace supervisors. Inspectors observed seven assessments and nine progress reviews, and three training sessions were observed and given a grade 4. Inspectors examined a range of documents, including portfolios of evidence, individual learning plans, a range of development and action plans, policies, procedures, minutes from meetings, reports from awarding bodies and internal and externally produced reports and surveys. They also studied the most recent self-assessment report which was produced in September 2001.

THE PROVIDER AS A WHOLE

Context

2. Milltech is a private training company which has offered government-funded training since 1983. It is owned by three directors. Two directors have overall responsibility for the company, and the third is also on the management team. The company employs four other managers, 10 training staff and seven support staff. Milltech provides all off-the-job training at its training centre in Sunderland. None of the training is subcontracted.

3. Milltech has a contract with Tyne and Wear Learning and Skills Council (LSC). In May 2002, the unemployment rate for Sunderland was 5.5 per cent, compared with 5.2 per cent in the Northeast and 3 per cent nationally. The main areas of employment in the area are in retailing, business administration, manufacturing, hospitality, catering and construction. The 1991 census shows that the proportion of people from minority ethnic groups in Sunderland is 1.1 per cent, compared with the national average of 6.2 per cent. In 2001, the proportion of school leavers achieving five or more general certificates of secondary education (GCSEs) at grade C or above was 39.2 per cent, compared with 42.8 per cent in the Northeast and 47.9 per cent nationally.

Work-based learning for young people

4. Retention and achievement rates are poor in all occupational areas. The achievement rates over the past four years for modern apprentices in engineering, technology and manufacturing, business administration, management and professional, and retailing, customer service and transportation are 29 per cent, 24 per cent and 10 per cent respectively. For learners on national vocational qualification (NVQ) programmes, the achievement rates are 10 per cent, 13 per cent and 29 per cent respectively, for the same occupational areas over the same period.

5. Learners are given good support. Internal verification is thorough. In engineering, technology and manufacturing, learners have good on-the-job training, but there is inadequate involvement in the review process by employers. Key skills development is good in business administration, management and professional, but there is inadequate development of background knowledge. There is a good progress review process. In retailing, customer service and transportation, individual learning plans are poor, as is the understanding of the customer service qualification structure.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

Grade 4

6. Milltech is a limited company and is owned by three directors. The directors are responsible for the strategic, operational and financial management of the company, which includes quality assurance and equality of opportunity. A management team of five manages the various functions of the organisation. Other staff include 10 training officers and a support team of administration and information technology (IT) staff. The company has policies for equal opportunities and quality assurance. Milltech has produced three self-assessment reports, the most recent in September 2001.

STRENGTHS

- good external links
- effective staff appraisal and staff development
- good equal opportunities practice
- good use of feedback for continuous improvement

WEAKNESSES

- poor monitoring of training
- inadequate monitoring of work placements
- weak self-assessment process
- insufficient management of assessment

7. Milltech has good training partnerships and effective links with a range of outside agencies. Long-established and strong links have been developed with many companies and awarding bodies associated with the motor industry. Learners benefit from these links, especially for best apprentice awards. Effective links with local schools have developed in recent years. New links with minority ethnic groups are being established.

8. Communication between managers, training officers and administration staff is generally good. Staff are informed about all aspects of the organisation and have regular meetings that cover the essential areas of their business. However, the minutes from meetings are poor. They lack detail and no reference is made to the follow up of actions agreed at previous meetings.

9. Staff appraisal and staff development are effective. Staff appraisals are carried out on a regular basis and provide good, critical and clear reviews of all the essential elements of a person's job. Targets identified at appraisal are linked to strategic objectives and are monitored regularly. Staff development is carried out after the appraisal process. Staff undertake considerable training through external courses or by regular in-house training workshops. For many staff, training is continuous and meets the company's and the individual's needs. Staff development is well recorded and regularly reviewed. Each quarter, staff produce a report for their manager on the progress towards their individual

MILLTECH LIMITED

targets and objectives.

10. Contracts for workplace providers include requirements for health and safety, equality of opportunity and attendance at off-the-job training. A contract is established with workplace providers for all the learners placed there. Some minor breaches of health and safety practice were observed in a few employers' premises.

11. Considerable development is taking place with the management information system, but it is too early to judge its effectiveness.

12. The monitoring of learners' training and progress is poor. Milltech acknowledges that the retention and achievement rates are poor in all areas of learning. There is insufficient analysis and monitoring of data to identify trends. A very recent internal report on retention and achievement rates, identified the need for year-on-year comparisons and for a more thorough and regular analysis of learners' progress. Co-ordination of on- and off-the-job training is inadequate.

Equality of opportunity**Contributory grade 2**

13. There is good equal opportunities practice and senior managers are committed to its promotion. The equal opportunities policy is comprehensive and clearly written.

Milltech has developed its own equal opportunities programme, which clearly describes the implications of discrimination, harassment, bullying and disability awareness in an easy to read form. The programme is used in the learners' induction. All learners and employers are given a copy of the programme for future reference. Learners and employers are given clear advice on what they should do if they have concerns. There are good examples to show the action that has taken place when equality of opportunity concerns have been raised. Appropriate action has enabled some young people to remain in learning, when they might otherwise have left.

14. Equal opportunities data are collected and analysed, and conclusions are drawn from the data. Every learner recruited from a minority ethnic group is monitored from initial contact to work placement. Clear reasons are identified if they are unsuccessful in gaining a work placement. The company has set itself realistic targets to increase or maintain representation from under-represented groups. In the contract year 2000-01, 1.6 per cent of applications were from minority ethnic learners, and of the 94 learners who were placed, 2.1 per cent were from minority ethnic groups. There were no minority ethnic learners at the time of inspection.

15. The company makes great efforts to recruit from under-represented groups. New recruitment materials show a balanced representation of young people and posters have been translated into four languages. They have been displayed in a range of minority ethnic organisations and in other public places. Milltech's promotional activities include a jobs and training fair at a Bangladeshi community centre. The company is aware of the problems which may inhibit recruitment. For example, the company has no work placements with employers from minority ethnic groups.

16. A presentation has been made to pupils at an all girls' school about the full range of work opportunities. However, recruitment materials do not show under-represented gender groups in the different vocational areas. There is some gender balance in business administration, but the learner profile in the motor vehicle trade remains traditional.

17. Approximately 12 per cent of learners at Milltech have a disability, an additional learning need or both. There are early signs of effective support for learners with learning difficulties. Appropriate resources, including basic skills learning materials, a laptop with voice recognition software, interactive CD-ROMs, and computer-based test materials have recently been purchased. Learners are given additional individual support for their learning if it is required. Learners have been helped by the use of readers and scribes. Staff have received training in dyslexia awareness, and are able to describe how their increased understanding of the disability will impact on teaching and learning. The company is registered to carry out testing for dyslexia and staff have been trained in the use of the tests. There is good evidence that learners who have dyslexia are effectively

supported.

18. Pastoral support is also available. Information about pastoral support needs are received from training officers, assessors or employers and can take a number of forms. For example, a mentor has supported learners during the transition period from school to work placement and others have been helped to deal with the unrealistic expectations of employers with their new learners. When serious concerns are raised, parents can be involved. The company is developing its relationships with parents, particularly those of younger learners, under 18 years of age. Letters of appreciation have been received from parents when serious problems have been resolved. Milltech has recently appointed an additional support tutor, who is able to give a number of examples where learners have been helped to succeed with their learning.

19. The contract with employers includes reference to equal opportunities. The employer pack contains a copy of Milltech's equal opportunities policy and equal opportunities awareness programme. Employers are encouraged to use the equal opportunities policy. However, although the Milltech is responsive when problems are raised, there is no evidence that further active promotion of equality of opportunity to employers takes place.

20. The Milltech office is in a grade two listed building and there are access difficulties for learners with restricted mobility. A recent audit has been carried out, and action to improve access is planned, within the constraints of the building's listed status. Milltech ensures that work placements are accessible to learners and that the needs of learners with restricted mobility are met.

Quality assurance**Contributory grade 4**

21. Milltech has a range of quality assurance policies and procedures. A quality assurance manual has been in place since 1994, which is cross-referenced to quality assurance procedures. The procedures are designed to follow the learning process, and many identify clear timescales. Policies and procedures are reviewed and most are up to date, but there are gaps, particularly in relation to self-assessment, internal audit and the monitoring of employers. Quality assurance documents are centrally placed for version control. All changes to documents are circulated and staff sign to confirm that they have received, read, and understood the new or amended policies or procedures. Individual staff or departments do not have copies of policies and procedures.

22. Management of quality assurance is carried out by a senior manager, and an internal auditor supports this role. Both have been trained to develop and carry out quality assurance procedures. All procedures are approved and authorised by a managing director and are regularly monitored through internal audit. This includes a planned annual audit schedule and unscheduled sampling. The outcomes of internal audit are recorded on audit checklists which identify compliance. A corrective action request form is used to record areas of non-compliance, to initiate changes or propose new policies and procedures. These may be completed by the internal auditor or by any other member of staff who wishes to propose a change. The completed forms are submitted to the senior management team for discussion, approval and action. However, although the form is designed to identify the problem, the degree of priority, the corrective action required, and a date for the follow up audit, it does not specify the level of priority of action or set clear timescales. Most of the forms completed between 1999-2002, do not identify the corrective action required, or timescales. Where a follow up audit date has been identified, it has passed without further check on progress.

23. The use of feedback for continuous improvement is good. The company actively seeks and welcomes feedback and takes action to improve its practice as a result. Detailed surveys are carried out after induction and learners and supervisors are surveyed twice a year during work-based learning. There is a very high response rate. Responses from surveys are analysed and there is a full record of the follow up of concerns raised. A concerns file is in place and staff, supervisors, employers and learners are encouraged to raise any concerns they might have. There is clear evidence that all concerns are dealt with sensitively. A range of good examples indicates that continuous improvements are being made as a result of feedback. These include the recent appointment of staff to give additional support, and specialist resources for learners with specific learning needs.

24. The monitoring of employers and work placements is inadequate. The initial contracting process is satisfactory, but further formal monitoring is restricted to health and safety checks. The employers' contract for training placements does not specify a timescale for review, or identify the learners and programmes to which it relates. Contracts are modified in response to internal or external change. The initial contracting process checks that jobs will support the achievement of qualifications. Training officers are asked to identify any changes when they make their regular visits, but the recording

of this is sometimes unclear. For example, one learner remained in a work placement where it was impossible to achieve the qualification and this was only identified after the learner had been training for almost a year. There is a detailed employers' pack which includes information on learning programmes, contractual requirements, the quality assurance policy, the equal opportunities policy and a copy of the equal opportunities awareness programme. However, there is no evidence of routine monitoring of the contract's application. Some employers are unclear about what contact and information they should expect after the initial contract has been agreed. Employers are positive about Milltech's responsiveness and the good informal relationships that exist. Milltech produces an annual learner progress report for the largest employer, but regular formal contact does not generally take place.

25. Milltech collects a wide range of data for quality assurance purposes, and is developing IT systems to support its analysis. There have been improvements in the use of data in decision-making, but it is too early to judge the effectiveness of the new systems.

26. Self-assessment is weak. The self-assessment report is insufficiently detailed or thorough. It does not adequately relate to the 'Common Inspection Framework', and there is no proper analysis of retention and achievement rates. There is repetition across the areas of learning, and significant weaknesses relating to poor retention rates have not been identified as a management concern. The report does not acknowledge poor achievement rates as a key weakness. The opportunity to update the self-assessment report for the inspection was not taken, although a separate, full report about poor retention and achievement rates was produced in August 2002. The development plan resulting from the self-assessment report relates to each strength and weakness and has been monitored on a regular basis. However, the plan lacks detail, measurable targets and success criteria for achievement. Milltech's staff have been trained in self-assessment, and were consulted during the production of the report. The self-assessment report includes reference to questionnaire feedback from supervisors, but there is no evidence of consultation with employers. Many of the identified strengths are no more than normal practice.

27. The internal verification process is thorough and effective. There is evidence that feedback to assessors is given and efficiently followed up. Assessors and verifiers meet regularly for standardisation and training, but the meetings are not always recorded adequately.

28. There is insufficient management of the assessment process and learners are not meeting target dates. There is a good database system to monitor the progress and achievement of learners, but it is not effectively used to manage assessment and target-setting. Over half of the learners from a random sample are behind target and most of the targets are at least six months overdue. There is no indication of new targets planned. One learner has very few elements left to achieve, but no action has been identified to support achievement. There is confusion among assessors, supervisors, and learners about the assessment process. There is little understanding about the

relationship between learning activities, assessment and progress reviews.

Good Practice

Milltech has offered sensitive support to one learner who has a disability, and significant progress with learning and personal confidence has been made.

AREAS OF LEARNING

Engineering, technology & manufacturing

Grade 4

Programmes inspected	Number of learners	Contributory grade
Work-based learning for young people	72	4

29. Milltech offers qualifications in vehicle mechanical repair and maintenance, vehicle body repair and vehicle paint refinishing. There are 72 learners. Twenty-seven are advanced modern apprentices, 29 are foundation modern apprentices and 16 are working towards NVQs at levels 1, 2 and 3. Learners are recruited through the careers service, schools, directly by Milltech or by employers. All applicants undertake an initial assessment, which includes tests for dexterity, basic skills and key skills. After assessment, they are interviewed by the work-placement officer and then by an assessor. This selection process results in recommendations being made for the appropriate level of qualification and vocational area. The assessors and work-placement officer liaise to match suitable applicants to work placements or employers. Most learners are employed or in a work placement. Learners' work locations range from small independent businesses to large automobile main dealerships, which offer training in various engineering occupations. Learners attend for one day a week for vocational training at Milltech's training centre. The remaining time is spent on-the-job at the work placement or employer. Key skills are taught at the training centre. The training officers visit learners in the workplace to carry out progress reviews and work-based assessment. The engineering department has a training standards manager and six training officers. All assessors are qualified or working towards the assessor qualification. There are two qualified internal verifiers.

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

Work-based learning for young people																
Advanced modern apprenticeships (AMA)	2001-02		2000-01		1999-2000		1998-99									
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Number of starts	9		32		43		40									
Retained*	0		4	12	10	23	19	47								
Successfully completed	0		4	12	10	23	19	47								
Still in learning	8		10	31	9	21	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

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	24		18		7		5									
Retained*	19		10	56	2	29	0	0								
Successfully completed	0		0	0	2	29	0	0								
Still in learning	19		10	56	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

Work-based learning for young people																
NVQ Training																
	2001-02		2000-01		1999-2000		1998-99									
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Number of starts	19		12		5		10									
Retained*	1		3	25	0	0	0	0								
Successfully completed	0		3	25	0	0	0	0								
Still in learning	15		1	8	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

- good on-the-job-training
- thorough internal verification process
- good learner support

WEAKNESSES

- poor retention and achievement rates
- inadequate involvement in the review process by employers

30. Learners are visited by training officers in their workplace every four weeks. The visits are centrally planned and arranged with the employer a week before they are due. During the visits, the training officers usually observe the learner carrying out work on customers' vehicles and they also question the learners on their technical knowledge. Feedback is given to the learner at the end of the observation and identified deficiencies are recorded as actions to be completed before the next visit. Any problems that the learner may be experiencing are dealt with during these visits. Evidence from the

observations is recorded by the training officer and cross-referenced by the learner to the relevant NVQ units. However, the visits do not always monitor health and safety practices in the workplace.

31. The internal verification practice is thorough. The company has developed a database to enable the training officers to identify when learners files are due for internal verification. The database identifies which of the units need verification, and is programmed to ensure that all units are sampled over a period of time. The process is designed to sample learners' portfolios at least three times during the period of training. The training standards manager has devised a schedule to observe all training officers twice a year. The results of the observations are recorded, together with feedback from the learner and the employer. Feedback is given to the training officers with action points when required.

32. There is a wide range of learning opportunities in the workplace. Employers range from large multi-national manufacturers' main agents to small independent garages. Facilities in most motor vehicle workshops are modern and meet current industrial standards. They range from general purpose repair equipment to high technology equipment needed for repairs on modern vehicles. Learners are supervised by experienced tradespeople who have good practical and technical knowledge. They help the learners to gather evidence for the NVQ portfolios. Learners progress to more demanding tasks as they gain experience and many work with minimal supervision.

33. Retention and achievement rates on all motor vehicle programmes are poor. For the period 1998 to 2001, 124 learners started the advanced modern apprenticeship programme, of whom 27 are still in learning and 33 completed their framework. For the same period, 54 learners started the foundation modern apprenticeship programme, of whom 29 are still in learning and only two achieved their qualification. Forty-six learners started on NVQ training programmes for the period 1998 to 2001. There are 16 still in learning, and three have achieved their qualification. Poor retention rates were identified in Milltech's self-assessment report. Recruitment of advanced modern apprentices decreased significantly in 2001-02, but has increased steadily for foundation modern apprentices. NVQ recruitment also shows a steady increase with the exception of 1999-2000 when recruitment fell.

34. There is inadequate involvement of employers in the progress review process. Reviews are carried out regularly and action plans are agreed between the learner and the training officer. Employers are only consulted after the future actions have been agreed and do not take part in the planning of actions. Employers are not fully aware of the learners' progress and rely on the training officer to keep them informed. This lack of knowledge of the NVQ process makes it difficult to structure the on-the-job training. Portfolios have NVQ unit monitoring charts, but there is no monitoring of completed elements within each unit. Training officers are not always fully aware of the learners' progress. Individual learning plans are discussed at progress reviews, but learners do not have their own copy. They are retained centrally in the learners' files at Milltech's offices.

Good Practice

When NVQ units are completed they are assessed, internally verified and unit accreditation is applied for.

Business administration, management & professional**Grade 4**

Programmes inspected	Number of learners	Contributory grade
Work-based learning for young people	78	4

35. Milltech offers foundation and advanced modern apprenticeships in business administration. There are 43 advanced modern apprentices, 33 foundation modern apprentices and two learners working towards NVQs. All modern apprentices work towards the achievement of key skills at the appropriate level. Milltech attends careers fairs and schools, and liaises with the Connexions Service. After recruitment, young people attend a work-placement interview to identify an appropriate company for work-based learning. Learners are placed in a variety of organisations, including manufacturing and service companies and public service offices. Most young people are offered employment and most of the training is on the job. Off-the-job training is offered at one site in Sunderland and learners attend for one day every two weeks. The training focuses primarily on key skills. There are three qualified training officers, who visit learners in the work placement to review progress and help with the collection of evidence for portfolios.

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

Work-based learning for young people																
Advanced modern apprenticeships (AMA)																
	2001-02		2000-01		1999-2000		1998-99									
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Number of starts	19		40		47		60									
Retained*	0		2	5	7	15	29	48								
Successfully completed	0		2	5	5	11	24	40								
Still in learning	13		20	50	9	19	1	2								

*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

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	30		18		2		4									
Retained*	0		4	22	1	50	0	0								
Successfully completed	0		1	6	1	50	0	0								
Still in learning	25		8	44	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

Work-based learning for young people																
NVQ Training																
	2001-02		2000-01		1999-2000		1998-99									
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Number of starts	3		2		13		8									
Retained*	0		0	0	3	23	0	0								
Successfully completed	0		0	0	3	23	0	0								
Still in learning	2		0	0	0	0	0	0								

*retained learners are those who have stayed in learning for at least the planned duration of their training programmes, or have successfully completed their programme within the time allowed

STRENGTHS

- good, supportive work placements
- good development of key skills
- good progress review process

WEAKNESSES

- poor retention and achievement rates
- inadequate development of background knowledge

OTHER IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED

- better involvement in work-based assessment by employers

36. Learners are given on-the-job training in good, well-equipped work placements. Employers interview and select learners from a number of learners' curriculum vitae,

which are sent by Milltech. Learners are well supported by their employers. Employers offer work-based learning to help the learners achieve their qualifications. When learners are not able to gain the full range of experience for the qualification, Milltech's staff work closely with them to identify alternatives. One company has recognised the achievements of one of their learners by offering an apprentice award. The successful learner and their family will attend to a special presentation ceremony to receive the award.

37. Milltech has made considerable efforts to improve the achievement rates for key skills. It offers additional workshops and focuses on key skills in the monthly review process. Considerable progress is being made in making key skills training an integral part of the NVQ structure. Learners are increasingly more aware of the importance of key skills. Key skills workshops are held every fortnight and learners have a training programme that focuses on personal assignments relating to the learners' work context. The assignments also generate additional evidence for the NVQ.

38. There is a good progress review process. Visits are centrally planned and the Milltech support team makes appointments for training officers. Targets are set every quarter and learners' progress is monitored every month. Comprehensive notes ensure an accurate record of progress and achievement, and they are updated to record the targets for the next review. Work-based supervisors are not present for this process but are informed of the outcomes by the training officer. Supervisors help learners to achieve their targets. They identify how to gather appropriate evidence when the learners' job does not cover the full range of the NVQ. Employers are involved in on-the-job training and ensure that learning meets the requirements of the NVQ and the needs of the organisation. Pastoral support is available and learners feel able to contact Milltech's staff with problems.

39. There are poor achievement rates for modern apprenticeship frameworks and NVQ achievement. Of the 166 advanced modern apprentices recruited since 1998, 26 per cent are still in learning and 25 per cent have completed the full framework. For the 54 foundation modern apprentices in the same period, 61 per cent remain in learning and 12 per cent have achieved the full framework. NVQ achievement is poor, with 13 per cent achieving and 8 per cent remaining in learning. Recruitment to foundation apprenticeship programmes has improved over the past two years while recruitment on to advanced modern apprenticeship programmes has declined each year since 1998-99. Recruitment to NVQ programmes is poor. Retention rates are poor for all training programmes.

40. There is inadequate development of learners' background knowledge and understanding. Most of the learning takes place on the job, with the exception of key skills. While assignments are applicable to the NVQ and key skills, learners do not follow a structured plan to develop their knowledge of business administration. During the assessment process learners answer oral questions about their own experiences, but little or no time is allocated to developing their background knowledge. Few learning resources or text books are available. Milltech plans to develop this area and has

recently installed interactive computer systems in some of their training rooms and intends to upgrade the learning materials to meet the requirements of the qualification.

41. While employers are very supportive of their learners, they are not involved in the work-based assessments. Some supervisors do not understand the NVQs and key skills and how they are assessed and are not always able to help learners identify assessment opportunities in the workplace. Although most supervisors have demanding roles, they are very willing to help their learners.

Good Practice

Milltech's staff are given an effective induction which includes job coaching, support and observations of their performance. They are also encouraged to compare work experiences with other members of staff as well as their mentor.

Retailing, customer service & transportation**Grade 4**

Programmes inspected	Number of learners	Contributory grade
Work-based learning for young people	22	4

42. Milltech offers advanced and foundation modern apprenticeships and NVQ training in retailing, distribution and warehousing and customer service leading to NVQs at levels 2 and 3. There are eight advanced modern apprentices, eleven foundation apprentices and three NVQ learners. Learners are recruited from the careers service, schools and employers and all are employed or placed in the motor trade industry. Training is given on the job through individual coaching. Off-the-job-training is carried out every fortnight at Milltech's premises. The training focuses mainly on key skills and portfolio development. Progress reviews are undertaken at 12-weekly intervals and assessors have contact with learners every four weeks or less depending on the stage of their training programme. Milltech's staff carry out an induction to the learning programmes and initial assessment before learners are placed. When learners are already in employment they receive a workplace induction. Staff from Milltech visit the learners to review and monitor progress, and carry out assessments for the NVQ. All vocational assessment takes place in the workplace by the assessor. There are four occupationally qualified staff, of whom one is part time and three are full time. All are qualified assessors and three are qualified internal verifiers. Most have training qualifications.

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

Work-based learning for young people																
Advanced modern apprenticeships (AMA)																
	2001-02		2000-01		1999-2000		1998-99									
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Number of starts	1		6		10		14									
Retained*	0		0	0	0	0	3	21								
Successfully completed	0		0	0	0	0	3	21								
Still in learning	1		4	67	2	20	1	7								

*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

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	8		7		1		1									
Retained*	0		3	43	1	100	1	100								
Successfully completed	0		0	0	0	0	0	0								
Still in learning	8		3	43	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

Work-based learning for young people																
NVQ Training																
	2001-02		2000-01		1999-2000		1998-99									
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Number of starts	4		1		2		3									
Retained*	0		1	100	1	50	0	0								
Successfully completed	0		1	100	1	50	0	0								
Still in learning	3		0	0	0	0	0	0								

*retained learners are those who have stayed in learning for at least the planned duration of their training programmes, or have successfully completed their programme within the time allowed

STRENGTHS

- good individual support
- thorough internal verification

WEAKNESSES

- poor retention and achievement rates
- poor individual learning plans
- poor understanding of customer service qualification by learners and assessors

OTHER IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED

- better involvement in work-based assessment by employers

43. Milltech has well-established relationships with many local employers. Learners benefit from good work placements with employers who are committed to the training

and development of their staff. Training is good, although not formally planned or evaluated. Employers offer appropriate activities and responsibilities to enable learners to generate a wide range of evidence of competence for their qualifications. There are good career opportunities and some learners are successful in achieving promotion. Many learners who are unemployed when they start their training programme, are offered employment either during or at the end of their training. Some employers give learners time at work to collect evidence and develop their portfolios. Learners are visited regularly at work and employers and Milltech's staff work together to support learners in the workplace.

44. Assessors carry out observations in the workplace. They make good use of work-based evidence, which covers the NVQ and key skills. There is a wide range of evidence in learners' portfolios including personal reports, witness testimony, products from work and knowledge questions and responses. The portfolios are comprehensive and detailed.

45. The internal verification of learners' work is thorough and is managed through a comprehensive database, which identifies learners' achievements and units to be sampled. Internal verification is well planned and includes the sampling of assessor decisions, interviewing learners and checking of portfolio evidence. Assessors are observed twice a year and detailed feedback is given on their performance. There are good verification records and internal verification can be monitored in the learners' portfolios.

46. The achievement rates of modern apprenticeship frameworks and NVQs are poor. Of the 31 advanced modern apprentices recruited since 1998, there are 26 per cent still in learning and 13 per cent completed the full framework. Of the 17 foundation modern apprentices recruited since 1998, 65 per cent remain in learning and none has achieved the full framework. NVQ achievement rates are also poor. Of the 10 learners recruited to NVQ programmes since 1998, two achieved an NVQ and three remain in learning. Recruitment to foundation apprenticeship programmes has increased during the past two years and recruitment to NVQ programmes has remained poor throughout the four years. The recruitment of advanced modern apprentices has declined every year since 1998-99 to just one learner in 2001-02. Retention rates are mostly poor. Of the 31 advanced modern apprentices recruited since 1998, 13 per cent were retained. Retention rates for foundation modern apprentices and NVQ learners are 83 per cent and 29 per cent respectively.

47. Individual learning plans lack detail. They do not reflect the individual nature of learning and some do not contain the full framework requirements. Key skills levels are not always correct and unit achievements are not always entered. Employers are not involved in the development of the plan and learners and employers are not given a copy. They are kept at Milltech's office and are taken out to learners at the 12-weekly reviews. Some are not updated after the review process. Employers are rarely involved in the progress reviews although they do sign them after completion. Learners and employers are given a copy of the progress review form but are not always aware of the

individual's progress. One learner who has been training since April 2001, has not achieved any of the 14 units of the qualification but this was recorded as satisfactory at her review.

48. There is poor understanding of the customer service qualification framework, by assessors and learners. The additional units are not entered on the individual learning plan and the amount of additional units is not known, or is misunderstood. One individual learning plan has the incorrect key skill levels entered.

49. Most employers expressed an interest to be more involved in the assessment process. One supervisor is a qualified assessor but Milltech did not know this.