

REINSPECTION REPORT

Milltech Ltd Reinspection

09 October 2003



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

- work-based learning for all people over 16
- provision in further education colleges for people aged 19 and over
- the University for Industry's **learndirect** provision
- Adult and Community Learning
- learning and job preparation programmes 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.

REINSPECTION REPORT

Milltech Ltd Reinspection

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REINSPECTION REPORT

DESCRIPTION OF THE PROVIDER

1. Milltech Ltd (Milltech) is a private training organisation which is jointly owned by its directors. It is based in Sunderland where it has one training centre in a grade 2 listed building. It provides work-based learning for young people, funded by Tyne and Wear Learning and Skills Council (LSC) in three areas of learning. None of the training is subcontracted.
2. There are three directors who share responsibility for the management of training. They are supported by a senior management team consisting of a training co-ordinator, a production manager, a business development manager and an internal auditor. The training team consists of two team leaders, an off-the-job training co-ordinator, two basic skills tutors, a pastoral support tutor and five training officers. There are two production assistants, three administrative assistants and a cleaner.
3. According to the 2001 census, the proportion of people from minority ethnic groups in Sunderland is 1.9 per cent, compared with 2.4 per cent in the Northeast and 9.1 per cent nationally.
4. Milltech is accredited with the Investor in People standard, a national standard for improving an organisation's performance through its people.

SCOPE OF PROVISION

Engineering, technology & manufacturing

5. Milltech offers advanced and foundation modern apprenticeships and national vocational qualifications (NVQs) in motor vehicle maintenance and repair, vehicle body and paint operations. All learners are employed or on work placements in the Sunderland area. They are recruited after referral by Connexions, by direct application or by recommendation from employers. Most are recruited after leaving school during July and August at the end of each school year. There are 27 foundation modern apprentices, 19 advanced modern apprentices and 14 NVQ learners. They all attend off-the-job training at Milltech's training centre in Sunderland for one day every week.

Business administration, management & professional

6. In business administration there are 28 advanced modern apprentices and 41 foundation modern apprentices, all of whom are employed or on work placements in the Sunderland area. They are recruited after referral by Connexions, by direct application or by recommendation from employers. All learners attend Milltech's training centre one day a fortnight for off-the-job training.

Retailing, customer service & transportation

7. In this area of learning there are seven advanced modern apprentices, four foundation modern apprentices and one NVQ learner. Learners are referred from Connexions and some are recommended by employers or existing learners. All learners are employed or in work placements and attend Milltech's training centre in Sunderland for one day a fortnight for off-the-job training.

ABOUT THE REINSPECTION

Number of inspectors	4
Number of inspection days	15
Number of learner interviews	40
Number of staff interviews	38
Number of employer interviews	27
Number of locations/sites/learning centres visited	27

OVERALL JUDGEMENT

8. At the previous inspection, leadership and management was unsatisfactory, quality assurance was unsatisfactory and equality of opportunity was good. The training provided in engineering, business administration, and customer service was unsatisfactory. At the reinspection, all aspects of the provision were found to be satisfactory or better.

GRADES

grade 1 = outstanding, grade 2 = good, grade 3 = satisfactory, grade 4 = unsatisfactory, grade 5 = very weak

	Inspection	Reinspection
Leadership and management	4	3
Contributory grades:		
Equality of opportunity	2	3
Quality assurance	4	2

	Inspection	Reinspection
Engineering, technology & manufacturing	4	3
Contributory grades:		
Work-based learning for young people	4	3

	Inspection	Reinspection
Business administration, management & professional	4	3
Contributory grades:		
Work-based learning for young people	4	3

	Inspection	Reinspection
Retailing, customer service & transportation	4	3
Contributory grades:		
Work-based learning for young people	4	3

KEY FINDINGS

Achievement and standards

9. **Retention rates in engineering and business administration are improving steadily.** Far fewer learners now leave the training programmes early. Historically, achievement rates have been poor, but most current learners are making sound progress towards achieving their learning aims.

10. Currently there are only a few learners on the customer service training programme and some are still making slow progress.

11. **Learners who are unemployed at the start of their training programme are quickly found suitable work placements** in all areas of learning and many progress directly into full-time employment.

Quality of education and training

12. **There are good reviews of learners' progress in all areas of learning.** Milltech's staff work closely with learners to evaluate their progress and to plan the next steps. Learners are encouraged to review their own learning goals and speed of progress. Most employers participate fully in progress reviews.

13. **Milltech uses a wide range of assessment methods.** Assessment is always well planned. The methods are well chosen to match individual learners' preferences and the practical arrangements at different workplaces.

14. **Milltech has extensive contacts with local employers in all areas of learning.** It provides learners with good work placements in modern car dealerships and offices. Learners in engineering often work on expensive motor vehicles using very modern equipment and tools. Milltech's training centre is well equipped with teaching resources and provides a pleasant environment for learning. Learners in all areas attend frequent

off-the-job training sessions.

15. **There are thorough arrangements to provide help with literacy and numeracy or guidance on personal concerns for learners in all areas of learning.** All support is provided discreetly and is carefully linked with individual needs.

16. **In engineering, good links are being developed between the on- and off-the-job training.** However, in business administration, and customer service, these links are not being made and there is insufficient co-ordination between activities in the workplace and the training which takes place in Milltech's training centre.

Leadership and management

17. **Milltech has a clear strategic direction.** All staff are given clear targets and objectives to improve the experience of learners. They have clear responsibilities and receive good training on issues which are relevant to learners. Milltech has also invested heavily in new information and communications technology (ICT) equipment and software.

18. **There are good procedures for monitoring learners' progress.** Milltech carefully checks attendance, punctuality and the amount of work each learner has completed. It provides useful feedback to employers, parents and learners on how well they are progressing.

19. **Milltech makes very effective use of data.** It analyses performance and uses the information well to identify areas for improvement.

20. There are satisfactory procedures to protect learners from harassment, bullying or exploitation in the workplace. However, there is insufficient promotion of equality and diversity to current learners. Equality of opportunity is covered only very briefly during progress reviews and there are no refresher sessions or workshops during the off-the-job training sessions. Some training rooms can only be reached by a narrow staircase and access is difficult for people with restricted mobility.

During the reinspection process, the inspectors identified the following strengths and weaknesses:

Leadership and management

Strengths

- clear strategic direction
- good management of learner support
- good monitoring of learners' progress
- very effective use of data

Weaknesses

- insufficient co-ordination of on- and off-the-job training

- insufficient promotion of equality of opportunity to current learners

Engineering, technology & manufacturing

Strengths

- improving retention rates
- thorough review practices
- good work placements
- good links being developed between on- and off-the-job training

Weaknesses

- historically poor achievement rates

Business administration, management & professional

Strengths

- improving retention rates
- good planning of assessment
- good target-setting for learners in progress reviews
- supportive work placements

Weaknesses

- historically poor achievement rates
- poor links between on- and off-the-job training

Retailing, customer service & transportation

Strengths

- well-structured and effective progress reviews
- effective links with employers
- good variety of assessment methods

Weaknesses

- some slow progress
- poor links between on- and off-the-job training

DETAILED REINSPECTION FINDINGS

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

Grade 3

During the reinspection process, the inspectors identified the following strengths and weaknesses:

Strengths

- clear strategic direction
- good management of learner support
- good monitoring of learners' progress
- very effective use of data

Weaknesses

- insufficient co-ordination of on- and off-the-job training
- insufficient promotion of equality of opportunity to current learners

21. Since the previous inspection, Milltech has developed a clear strategy to enhance the quality of learning and to improve retention and achievement rates. There is a clear vision which is fully understood and shared by staff. All training staff have clear targets for improving the learners' progress. Staff have been given clear responsibilities for specific aspects of learning, such as improving pastoral care, developing a better review process and revising off-the-job training. There is effective communication among teams, with regular formal and informal meetings. These are used effectively to plan and discuss changes to training procedures. As at the previous inspection, Milltech has an effective staff development and appraisal system. Staff training is always designed to improve the experience of learners. For example, in engineering, staff have recently attended training courses in modern diesel injection and engine management systems. In business administration, and customer service, training has been arranged using taped professional discussion as a new method of assessment. Milltech has set out the main training requirements for its staff in a three-year development plan. It has recruited new staff who have specialist skills in areas such as pastoral support, literacy and numeracy training and quality assurance. These new skills are used well to complement those of the previous workforce and to improve the experience of learners through good teamworking.

22. There are good procedures for financial management and managing resources. For example, Milltech has recently invested heavily in a new computer training suite which was opened during the final week of the reinspection. New software has been purchased to enable learners on motor vehicle programmes to complete the training programme for the technical certificate. The training rooms have also been recently refurbished and decorated to a good standard and there is a wide range of textbooks and learning materials for all areas of learning.

23. There is good management of learner support. An effective strategy for literacy, numeracy and language support has been developed. Learners' needs are clearly identified during initial assessment and detailed learning plans are drawn up for each learner. There are good arrangements to respect learners' sensitivities. For example, individual learning plans for additional learning support are kept separate to those for core activities. Support is arranged according to the needs of individual learners and the learning programme. Individual teaching from specialist staff, small group work and general guidance by training officers are all well co-ordinated. There are good arrangements for monitoring learner's overall progress with literacy and numeracy. For example, additional six-monthly progress reviews are held for learners who have additional learning needs. There is a pastoral support tutor who is available to support learners who have personal difficulties or those who are considering leaving early. The role is well publicised and promoted within Milltech. Since August 2002, almost a third of all learners have received specialist support with issues ranging from debt to homelessness to working relationships with staff in the workplace.

24. There is insufficient management of links between on- and off-the-job training except in engineering. There are poor arrangements to ensure that assessors are aware of opportunities available in the workplace. They do not make sufficient use of the good training opportunities that many employers offer or incorporate these into training plans. Feedback from employers is not well used to improve the quality and effectiveness of off-the-job training. Most employers are given insufficient information about the content of off-the-job training in customer service and business administration. There has been insufficient management action to extend the good practices being developed in engineering to the other areas of learning.

Equality of opportunity

Contributory grade 3

25. Milltech has a comprehensive equal opportunities policy. It is clear, covers relevant legislation and is displayed prominently throughout Milltech's training centre. A copy is also provided to workplace supervisors as part of their information pack.

26. There are effective arrangements for protecting learners from harassment, bullying or exploitation through the pastoral support procedures and frequent workplace visits. Learners are fully aware of the complaints and appeals procedure. Milltech has arranged extensive dyslexia training for staff and has produced marketing material which is free from gender or racial stereotyping. The equal opportunities policy has been translated into four languages and distributed widely in the local community.

27. Milltech's training centre is in a grade 2 listed building. Some improvements to the design, such as additional internal handrails and better lighting, have been completed during 2002-03. However, recent plans for more significant improvements did not satisfy building regulations and have been rejected. Access to the new ICT suite and some of the training rooms is difficult for learners with restricted mobility.

28. There is insufficient promotion of equal opportunities to current learners. Equality of

opportunity and diversity is covered in induction, but only a few learners can remember the detail. There are insufficient procedures to reinforce learners' understanding. For example, equality of opportunity is given only a very cursory mention during progress reviews and is not included in any off-the-job training or lesson plans. Since the previous inspection, Milltech has set targets to attract learners from under-represented groups, but it has not met them. Some of the links with community groups, which were developed previously, have also now lapsed.

Quality assurance

Contributory grade 2

29. Milltech now uses its quality assurance procedures very effectively to monitor and improve the experience of learners and to enhance the quality and quantity of their learning. All staff are fully involved and concentrate their time and effort on helping learners. Significant improvements have been made in each area of learning.

30. There are now good procedures for monitoring training and learners' individual progress. This was an area of weakness at the previous inspection. Lesson plans for most off-the-job training are now held on a central database and there are effective arrangements to update these as requirements change. There are good control measures to ensure that all relevant topics are covered. Lessons are observed regularly by senior staff and good feedback is given to training officers. Since the previous inspection, Milltech has extensively revised many quality assurance procedures. There is now a much stronger emphasis on monitoring the support, training and guidance provided to individual learners. A detailed numerical analysis of each learner's progress is produced each quarter. This is monitored by senior staff, and progress is carefully reviewed with the relevant training officer at individual quarterly meetings. These meetings are now closely linked with the 12-weekly reviews for learners. Additional help, such as pastoral support, additional training or more frequent workplace visits are readily arranged when needed. There is a good, well-used system for all staff to raise concerns about individuals or groups of learners with senior colleagues, at any time through an effective system of internal memoranda. Staff concerns about learners are given high priority. For example, between April and September 2003, 49 issues were identified and 47 were responded to within 10 working days.

31. Milltech now makes very effective use of data to ensure that its training policies and procedures are being followed. It has invested well in a new management information system. All key training activities, such as induction, off-the-job training, reviews and assessments are well co-ordinated using a central database and timetable. Exception reports, such as records of non-attendance at off-the-job training or missed review dates are compiled promptly and passed to the relevant member of staff for action. There has been extensive analysis of achievement and retention data and the reasons why learners do not complete the programme. These data have been used to produce meaningful and challenging targets for all staff and to launch a number of improvement actions, such as pastoral visits early in the programme and improvements to the review process. Summary data are produced each month and discussed at staff meetings so that all staff have a good understanding of current performance on key measures and how to improve their contribution. Two detailed annual achievement and retention reports have

been compiled which clearly set out the main objectives and improvement areas.

32. Procedures for self-assessment have recently been revised and improved, so that a greater range of views and opinions are gathered. All staff are consulted and their views on current strengths and weaknesses are collected by the directors. The report is used well to provide a strategic view of the company and to identify the major development areas for continuous improvement. The most recent self-assessment report correctly identified the main strengths and weaknesses, although the significance of some strengths was overestimated. There was also a degree of complacency where previously identified strengths were assumed to still be current, even though some of the good practices had lapsed. This was particularly the case in the self-assessment of equality of opportunity. The report had been published immediately before the final reinspection visit. This was in accordance with Milltech's historical self-assessment cycle, but many staff had not been made fully aware of the final judgements contained in it.

33. There are satisfactory arrangements for internal verification in all areas of learning, and sound management of assessment. Assessors are kept up to date through regular meetings and useful standardisation exercises are arranged.

AREAS OF LEARNING

Engineering, technology & manufacturing

Grade 3

Programmes inspected	Number of learners	Contributory grade
Work-based learning for young people	60	3

During the reinspection process, the inspectors identified the following strengths and weaknesses:

Strengths

- improving retention rates
- thorough review practices
- good work placements
- good links being developed between on- and off-the-job training

Weaknesses

- historically poor achievement rates

Achievement and standards

34. At the time of the previous inspection, achievement and retention rates were poor. The number of early leavers has subsequently decreased and retention rates are improving steadily. For example, 12 advanced modern apprentices have started since August 2002 and only one has left. For foundation modern apprentices, there has been 28 starters and only 11 early leavers in the same period. Most of those who left early did so during the early part of 2002-03. Achievement rates are still poor, but are also beginning to improve. For example, at the time of the previous inspection, 10 foundation modern apprentices who started in 2000-01 were still in learning and six of these have now completed all aspects of their learning programme. A further three are still in learning and only one has left without completing the framework. For the advanced modern apprentices, 10 learners who started in 2000-01 were still in learning at the time of the previous inspection, four of these have now completed the framework. A further four are still in learning and only two have left without completing the framework.

35. Most learners are now making satisfactory progress with their portfolios. Learners now receive accreditation for completed units and a few new learners are progressing very rapidly indeed.

Quality of education and training

36. Progress reviews are now thorough. At the time of the previous inspection, reviews

were weak, with inadequate employer involvement and some poor documents. Formal reviews are now carefully scheduled and take place regularly, every 12 weeks. Most workplace supervisors now take a full role in the review process. They are advised in advance when a review is due and encouraged to set aside time to be able to participate. Reviews cover all relevant aspects of the learner's work, such as progress with portfolios, requirements for further evidence and the timetable for assessments. Actions from the previous review are always effectively reviewed, and non-achievement is challenged and specific, relevant targets are set for the next period. The documents used for reviews have been revised and now contain full details on the learner's progress. Similarly, individual learning plans have been revised, they are now updated frequently and are well used to monitor and plan learners' overall progress. Milltech has also introduced a clear method of calculating learners' overall progress as a percentage of learning objectives completed. This information is updated for each review, is clearly explained to learners and employers, and is used effectively to maintain and increase the learner's motivation. Milltech has recently started to provide employers and parents, where relevant, with useful quarterly written summaries of the learner's progress. These contain relevant information on the learner's level of motivation, attendance, progress with portfolios and punctuality. The views of the learners and the employers are also recorded on these summaries.

37. All learners take initial assessment tests and there are now effective arrangements for providing support with literacy and numeracy. All support is organised sensitively by two newly recruited specialist tutors. There are good arrangements to maintain confidentiality. For example, details of additional support are recorded on a separate individual learning plan which is not circulated to employers. Effective pastoral support is also now provided by a specialist tutor when learners have personal difficulties which may slow their progress or cause them to withdraw from learning.

38. Assessments in the workplace are generally carried out on a monthly basis. Assessment practices are satisfactory, with appropriate documents and good feedback given to the learners. There are satisfactory arrangements for internal verification. Learner's work is correctly sampled in accordance with awarding body requirements and timely feedback is given to assessors.

39. There is a good range of work placements. Milltech makes good use of an employer and applicant database to match learners and potential employers effectively. Placements range from small, well-established companies to medium and large modern garages and body repair workshops. These provide a wide variety of employment and work-experience opportunities. Many employers have worked with Milltech for a long time. They are fully satisfied with the learners selected for them and provide good practical support for learners. For example, in one large garage, almost the entire technical workforce are former Milltech learners. They have a good understanding of the qualifications and willingly use this knowledge to provide a wide range of relevant practical training. They also give good advice on organising portfolios. Most learners have access to very modern, sophisticated equipment and tools and become skilled in their use. Many carry out maintenance and repair work on very modern, expensive vehicles. Learners consider that they are receiving good training in the workplace and

that their courses are well organised and well managed.

40. Milltech has made good use of its working relationships with employers. Milltech has persuaded them to provide salary increases to help improve the achievement and retention rates for learners as they achieve particular milestones in their learning programmes.

41. Good links are being developed between the on- and off-the-job training, particularly at the larger car dealerships where several learners are based in one location. Most supervisors and learners have a detailed copy of the off-the-job training programme. Training officers now visit learners in the workplace frequently, up to twice each month. They effectively link the background knowledge content of the training programme to practical activities in the workplace. For the background knowledge sessions, learners are given good assignments to carry out as part of their day-to-day work. These activities are well used to reinforce and consolidate the learning that has taken place in the training centre. Employers and training officers frequently discuss the off-the-job training and supervisors are helped to prepare learners effectively for attendance at the training centres by allocating relevant types of work in the period leading up to a particular session.

42. Resources in the training centre are now good. Most training rooms have recently been refurbished and there is a newly opened ICT suite which has modern workstations. Learners are given a useful workbook for background knowledge activity and modern projection equipment is well used for presentations. Specialist CD-ROMs have recently been purchased and are well used to illustrate vehicle systems and repair methods. Teaching in the training centre and lesson-planning is satisfactory. Key skills assignments are now being well used by motor vehicle staff to fulfil the requirements of the modern apprenticeship framework. Effective coaching for key skills tests is carried out by a qualified key skills tutor.

Leadership and management

43. Since the previous inspection, Milltech has taken satisfactory action to improve the quality of training. Most of the actions have concentrated on improving retention and achievement rates by monitoring learners' progress much more closely, improving the use of data, improving the review process and using the long relationship with local employers more effectively to help learners. Arrangements for support with literacy and numeracy and pastoral support have also been improved.

44. Milltech's policy for equality of opportunity is explained to learners at induction and they are effectively protected from bullying and harassment at the training centre and in the workplace. Direct individual support is provided whenever needed. For example, a learner who has dyslexia has been given specialist help by a reader with taking tests. However, there is insufficient further training or guidance for most learners. Equality of opportunity is covered too simplistically during reviews without any meaningful discussions on rights and responsibilities. For example, in one garage, inappropriate

material is displayed on a canteen wall, but was not challenged by Milltech.

Business administration, management & professional**Grade 3**

Programmes inspected	Number of learners	Contributory grade
Work-based learning for young people	69	3

During the reinspection process, the inspectors identified the following strengths and weaknesses:

Strengths

- improving retention rates
- good planning of assessment
- good target-setting for learners in progress reviews
- supportive work placements

Weaknesses

- historically poor achievement rates
- poor links between on- and off-the-job training

Achievement and standards

45. At the time of the previous inspection, the retention and achievement rates were poor. Since that time, there has been a significant improvement in the proportion of learners who leave their programme early and retention rates are increasing. For example, since August 2002, 45 learners have started business administration programmes and only 11 have left. The retention rates of those who were still in learning at the time of the previous inspection are also improving. For example, 20 advanced modern apprentices who started in 2001-02, were still in learning at the time of the previous inspection, and only two of these have subsequently left without completing the framework. The pattern is similar for the foundation modern apprentices. Achievement rates are still poor, but are also beginning to improve. Milltech now monitors the progress of business administration learners very closely through progress reviews and statistical analysis. Most current learners, particularly those who have joined recently, are making good progress towards their qualifications and expect to complete their framework within the timeframe.

Quality of education and training

46. Assessment is very well planned and thorough. Assessment visits are scheduled in advance and full notification is given to learners and employers. The schedule is closely linked to learners' individual learning plans. The assessment method is carefully chosen in response to the learners' preferences and to the nature of the workplace. For example, at one workplace where learners work with confidential medical records, extensive use is made of assessment by observation to prevent difficulties with producing

portfolio evidence containing personal information. At another workplace, learners arrange conference and training events and these are well used to provide evidence about managing customer contact. Assessors are very thorough and explain assessment procedures to learners. They check the learner's understanding carefully by sensitive questioning and always seek the learner's agreement before carrying out an assessment. They give good feedback and explain fully if further evidence is needed. This feedback is well used to help plan the next steps for learners. All assessment methods are used flexibly. For example, when a work task was not providing sufficient new evidence during an observation, the assessor changed techniques to use questioning of knowledge and understanding so that time was not wasted. Milltech has recently introduced taped professional discussion as an additional assessment method to further increase flexibility.

47. There are satisfactory arrangements for internal verification. Learners' work is correctly sampled according to awarding body requirements. Good feedback is given to assessors. All assessors attend standardisation meetings which are used to ensure consistency by comparing assessments of written evidence.

48. Learners are now set meaningful long- and short-term targets during reviews. Employers, learners and training officers all participate fully. Review visits are centrally planned and learners and employers receive advance notification of the time which needs to be allocated. There are good arrangements for confirming that reviews take place on time and for investigating delays. Since the previous inspection, Milltech has introduced new review forms which contain detailed targets for the next period. These are always specific, define exactly which evidence learners need to collect and if additional training will be arranged. Progress is reviewed thoroughly and the next steps are carefully planned with the learner. Ample time is allowed, strong priority is given to the needs of the individual learner and learning plans are carefully checked and updated. Milltech monitors on a central database the overall progress of each learner towards their learning aims. This summarises how many learning objectives have been achieved and how many are awaiting completion. Training officers make good use of this information during reviews to help learners remain motivated. Learners who are making slow progress are encouraged to catch up and those who are proceeding well are congratulated. Milltech has recently started to provide employers and parents, where relevant, with useful quarterly written summaries of this information together with comments on the learner's level of motivation, attendance, progress with portfolios and punctuality. The views of the learners and the employers are also recorded on these summaries.

49. Milltech has extensive contacts with a wide range of employers in the Sunderland area. These contacts are well used to provide supportive work placements and employment opportunities for learners. Milltech makes good use of ICT, such as an employer and applicant database which matches learners carefully to the needs of individual employers. There are frequent visits to all workplaces by Milltech's staff. New workplace supervisors are provided with a useful information pack which clearly sets out their role and provides useful background information on work-based learning. Arrangements to release learners to attend Milltech's training centre are fully explained and conflicts with the demands of the workplace are well managed by both parties. All

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employers fully comply with the requirements to release learners. Off-the-job training takes place in recently refurbished training rooms which are pleasantly furnished. Most are equipped with ceiling mounted projection facilities which are used extensively. A new ICT suite with 11 modern workstations has just been installed and will be used to support learning from October 2003. Work has also started on extending this facility by installing a further 13 workstations. A wide range of textbooks and other learning materials are also available.

50. There are two new specialist tutors who provide effective individual help for learners who have literacy and numeracy needs during their off-the-job training sessions. Course tutors also arrange additional support, such as proofreading and help with spelling during this time. The support is arranged discreetly with particular care to protect learner's confidentiality. For example, details of this support are recorded on a separate individual learning plan, which is not circulated to employers.

51. Milltech now has a pastoral support tutor who is available to help learners who are facing barriers to remaining in learning or those with personal issues. She visits all learners in the workplace within four weeks of their recruitment and continues to work with learners who need pastoral support. There are good arrangements to protect learners' confidentiality during this process. For example, all records are kept centrally and details of visits are recorded on a database for which access is carefully controlled.

52. There are insufficient links between on- and off-the-job training. The off-the-job training for learners is planned centrally and employers are not given sufficient information on its content or the activities learners will carry out. There are inadequate arrangements to link the off-the-job training with work being carried out in the workplace. Employers are not given sufficient guidance to help them arrange for learners to practise new skills and consolidate their classroom teaching.

Leadership and management

53. There are strong procedures for managing the overall training programme. Key activities such as induction, assessments and reviews are scheduled well in advance and are well monitored. Off-the-job training sessions are now observed and constructive feedback is given to tutors. Learners' files are thoroughly checked for completion and good use is made of management information, particularly for monitoring the overall progress of learners.

54. Learners are effectively protected from bullying and harassment at the training centre and in the workplace. However, there are insufficient arrangements to promote equality of opportunity and to increase learners' understanding of diversity and the rights and responsibilities of others. Milltech's equal opportunities policy is explained at induction, but there is no further training or guidance for learners.

55. Since the previous inspection, there has been a number of staff changes in business administration. Some learners have been allocated four different training officers and

their work has been interrupted during changeover periods.

Retailing, customer service & transportation**Grade 3**

Programmes inspected	Number of learners	Contributory grade
Work-based learning for young people	12	3

During the reinspection process, the inspectors identified the following strengths and weaknesses:

Strengths

- well-structured and effective progress reviews
- effective links with employers
- good variety of assessment methods

Weaknesses

- some slow progress
- poor links between on- and off-the-job training

Achievement and standards

56. Recruitment in this area of learning has reduced since the previous inspection. Some learners are still making slow progress. For example, one learner has been training for over three years and has only recently completed the first three NVQ units. Overall, framework completion rates are still low, but fewer learners now leave early and they do now complete their learning aims eventually. For example, since August 2001, 21 learners have been recruited, five have so far completed the framework, and eight are still in learning. There is good progression into full-time employment for learners who are unemployed at the start of their programme.

Quality of education and training

57. There are well-structured and effective progress reviews for learners. They are well planned, using a central database to ensure that they take place on time. The training officer's diary is updated electronically and there are good arrangements to ensure that all documents are up to date and held in the learner's files. Employers and learners are notified well in advance by telephone and fax that a review is due and sufficient time is made available in the workplace. Since the previous inspection, Milltech has introduced new individual learning plans and revised review forms. All documents are comprehensive and are well designed. The use of individual learning plans is no longer a weakness. The new progress review forms contain detailed targets which includes short- and medium-term actions for the learner. They are now specific, well linked to the new individual learning plans, cover all aspects of the modern apprenticeship framework and reflect the activities in the workplace. Progress with previous targets is carefully evaluated and fully discussed, and the reasons for non-achievement are fully analysed

and recorded. Employers are fully involved in all discussions and are encouraged to comment on the learner's progress at work. Milltech has recently started to provide employers and parents, where relevant, with written summaries of learners' progress each quarter. These summaries contain useful information on the learner's level of motivation, attendance, progress with portfolios and punctuality. The views of learners and the employers are also recorded on these summaries.

58. There are effective links with employers. Milltech provides a wide variety of work-placement opportunities for customer service learners, many within the motor vehicle sales and distribution sector. Milltech makes good use of an employer and applicant database to carefully match learners to potential employers. Many learners who are unemployed at the start of their training programme are quickly found suitable work placements which often lead to full-time employment. Most placements provide learners with good learning opportunities. For example, some learners attend specialist internal training programmes which are run by their employers. Training officers visit all potential employers to ensure that the work-based supervisors are clear about their roles and responsibilities to support learners. A useful information pack about work-based learning is given to all new workplace supervisors. All employers fully comply with the need to release learners to attend Milltech's training centre for one day a fortnight.

59. The training rooms which are used for the off-the-job training have recently been refurbished and are pleasantly furnished. Most are equipped with ceiling mounted projection facilities which are used extensively. A new ICT suite with 11 modern workstations has just been installed and will be used to support learning from October 2003. Work has also started on extending this facility by installing a further 13 workstations. The content of the off-the-job training sessions are varied according to the individual learners' requirements. Some learners participate in group learning sessions and others have individual sessions to develop their understanding of key skills. All learning sessions are supported by satisfactory lesson plans and learning material. Staff are well qualified and are encouraged to keep their professional knowledge up to date.

60. There are two new specialist tutors who provide effective individual help to learners who have literacy and numeracy needs during their off-the-job training sessions. The support is arranged discreetly with particular care to protect learners' confidentiality. For example, details of this support are recorded on a separate individual learning plan which is not circulated to employers.

61. Milltech now has a pastoral support tutor to assist learners who have barriers to remaining in learning or those who have personal issues. She visits all learners in the workplace within four weeks of their recruitment and continues to work with learners who need pastoral support. There are good arrangements to protect learners' confidentiality during this process. For example, all records are kept centrally and details of visits are recorded on a database to which access is carefully controlled.

62. Assessment visits are regular, well planned and thorough. A wide variety of assessment methods is used to reflect the individual needs of the learner. Full use is made of direct observation, assignments, witness testimony and question and answer

sessions. The dates for assessment visits to workplaces are agreed in advance and all parties are fully informed. The assessment visits are well linked into the learner's individual learning plan and workplace activities. Learners are given good written and verbal feedback on their progress, the evidence requirements are fully explained and clear reasons are given for assessment decisions. When further evidence is needed, the reasons are carefully explained. Learners are encouraged to consider which arrangements for collecting evidence are most appropriate for them. Milltech has recently introduced taped professional discussions as an additional assessment method to further increase flexibility.

63. Arrangements for internal verification are satisfactory. Learners' work is correctly sampled in accordance with awarding body requirements. Good feedback is given to assessors. All assessors attend standardisation meetings which are used to ensure consistency by comparing assessments of written evidence.

64. There are insufficient links between on- and off-the-job training. Most off-the-job training is planned centrally and employers are not informed of its content. There is insufficient guidance and support for employers about how and when to link work activities with the training learners receive at Milltech's training centre. Some employers provide good internal training but there are inadequate arrangements to link these activities with the requirements of the learners' qualifications.

Leadership and management

65. There are now good arrangements for monitoring learners' progress. Arrangements for reviews and assessment are co-ordinated centrally and diaries are well managed. All staff have clear continual professional development plans to ensure that their occupational competence is up to date, in line with industry qualification requirements. An effective system is in place to observe all key activities of the training officer's role. These observations are well recorded and constructive feedback is given.

66. Since the previous inspection, there has been significant staff changes. Some learners have been allocated to four different training officers and their work and progress has been interrupted during the changeover periods. However, the centralised diaries and management systems have kept this to a minimum.

67. Learners are effectively protected from bullying and harassment at the training centre and in the workplace. However, there are insufficient arrangements to promote equality of opportunity and to increase learners' understanding of diversity and the rights and responsibilities of others. Milltech's policy for equality of opportunity is explained at induction, but there is no further training or guidance for learners.