

REINSPECTION REPORT

Manchester Training Limited Reinspection

18 September 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.

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Manchester Training Limited Reinspection

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REINSPECTION REPORT

DESCRIPTION OF THE PROVIDER

1. Manchester Training Limited (MTL) was established in 1969 to provide training for the transport and distribution sector. Until 2001, the company was run by a general manager directed by a board of non-executive directors. In November 2001, the company's board of directors was dissolved and two executive directors and a senior management team were appointed to run the business. Since the previous inspection, MTL has recruited new staff and now employs 33 full-time staff and a small number of part-time employees to provide support from MTL with staff development and self-assessment. At the time of the reinspection, MTL had 292 learners. Of these, almost 50 per cent are working towards a modern apprenticeship.

2. MTL is located in Middleton. The company provides government-funded and private training for businesses throughout Greater Manchester. MTL offers work-based learning for young people and adults in business administration, vehicle maintenance and repair, vehicle body and paint operations, customer service, retailing, distribution and warehouse operations, vehicle parts, transporting goods by road, and specialised plant and machinery operations. MTL's learners are working towards national vocational qualifications (NVQs), and foundation and advanced modern apprenticeships. Since the previous inspection, MTL has increased the number of adult learners in training through its Jobcentre Plus lift truck training programmes.

SCOPE OF PROVISION

Engineering, technology & manufacturing

3. There are 45 learners on motor vehicle training programmes. All of these learners are working towards a modern apprenticeship and are on training programmes for an NVQ at level 2 or 3 in vehicle maintenance and repair. Learners studying towards the foundation modern apprenticeship take approximately two years to achieve the NVQ at level 2 and learners studying for the advanced modern apprenticeship take up to four years to achieve the NVQ at level 3. All learners are employed and work in local companies. They attend MTL's training centre for one day every week for additional training and assessment purposes. MTL's training officers carry out learners' progress reviews and assessments in the workplace.

Business administration, management & professional

4. There are 19 learners on work-based learning programmes in business administration, all of whom are employed. One learner is studying for an advanced modern apprenticeship and is working towards an NVQ at level 3, 17 learners are working towards foundation modern apprenticeships and are working towards an NVQ at level 2 and there is one adult learner who is also working towards an NVQ at level 2. Learners receive individual coaching from MTL's staff in the workplace, and are supported by interactive computer-based training and by tutors either on the telephone or by e-mail. Off-the-job training is provided at MTL's training centre in Middleton. MTL's assessors visit learners at work for assessment purposes every month.

Retailing, customer service & transportation

5. MTL has 228 learners in this area of learning. The company provides NVQ and modern apprenticeship training in customer service, retailing, distribution, warehousing and storage operations, transporting goods by road and specialised plant and machinery operations. Of the 228 learners, 11 are working towards advanced modern apprenticeships and 61 are working towards foundation modern apprenticeships, 151 are working towards an NVQ and five are on a short job-focused training programme (SJFT).

6. All learners are employed, with the exception of those on the career advancement programme. The career advancement programme runs for 16 weeks and is designed to give young people an insight into different aspects of the motor vehicle and warehousing and distribution sector before entering into employment. Training is planned for one year for the foundation modern apprenticeship and two years for the advanced modern apprenticeship. All employed learners attend an induction programme carried out at their employer's premises. This is in addition to the induction provided by the employer. MTL's training advisers visit learners every four weeks for support, mentoring and assessment purposes. Progress reviews take place every three months. More frequent visits are organised for those learners who require additional support.

7. Learners working towards a modern apprenticeship are employed and are recruited by their employers. Learners work for organisations ranging from small independent businesses to large national companies. Learners are able to start their training programme at any time of the year. Employers provide on-the-job training in the workplace.

ABOUT THE REINSPECTION

Number of inspectors	7
Number of inspection days	30
Number of learner interviews	63
Number of staff interviews	47
Number of employer interviews	26
Number of subcontractor interviews	0
Number of locations/sites/learning centres visited	25
Number of partner/external agency interviews	2
Number of virtual learner questionnaires returned	0

OVERALL JUDGEMENT

8. The ALI's inspection in February 2002 found that training for retailing, customer service and transportation, and engineering, technology and manufacturing was satisfactory. However, training for business administration, management and professional was unsatisfactory. MTL's leadership and management of the provision, including its arrangements for quality assurance and equality of opportunity were also unsatisfactory. At the end of the reinspection process, the leadership and management of the programme were good and the company's arrangements for quality assurance and equality of opportunity were satisfactory. Training for engineering, technology and manufacturing was good, for retailing, customer service and transportation it was satisfactory. Training in business administration, management and professional was unsatisfactory.

GRADES

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

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

	Inspection	Reinspection
Engineering, technology & manufacturing	3	2
Contributory grades:		
Work-based learning for young people	3	2

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	Inspection	Reinspection
Business administration, management & professional	4	4
Contributory grades:		
Work-based learning for young people	4	4
Work-based learning for adults		None

	Inspection	Reinspection
Retailing, customer service & transportation	3	3
Contributory grades:		
Work-based learning for adults		3
Work-based learning for young people	3	3
New Deal 25+ and work-based learning for adults		3

KEY FINDINGS

Achievement and standards

9. The achievement rates are good for learners on NVQ lift truck training programmes and retailing and customer service. The historical data still indicates that modern apprenticeship framework completion rates are poor across all the training programmes. However, during the reinspection inspectors were able to see, across all areas, better progress reviews, improved progression rates for NVQ learners and learners on modern apprenticeships, improved key skills qualification progression and good overall retention rates.

10. Retention rates for those learners who have started training since the previous inspection are, on average, over 80 per cent and improving across all training programmes. Nearly all learners now stay with MTL for the duration of their training programme. Teaching is good and there is an adequate range of qualifications available to learners. Many learners achieve additional awards like a lift truck driving licence and manual handling skills.

Quality of education and training

Grades awarded to learning sessions at the original inspection

	Grade 1	Grade 2	Grade 3	Grade 4	Grade 5	Grade 6	Grade 7	Total
Engineering, technology & manufacturing	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	1
Business administration, management & professional	0	0	1	3	0	0	0	4
Retailing, customer service & transportation	0	0	0	2	0	0	0	2
Total	0	0	2	5	0	0	0	7

11. **Two-thirds of the learning sessions observed were graded as good or better.** No unsatisfactory teaching was observed. In the best learning sessions, good use is made of a range of teaching methods. **There is particularly good use of computer-based learning resources in the training for business administration programmes and in supporting learners at work.** MTL's support staff are used effectively to help those learners with additional learning needs. Teaching has improved since the previous inspection and learners on all training programmes are making satisfactory or good progress.

12. **There is a wide range of resources to support learners with additional learning needs.** These resources include information and communications technology (ICT) programmes, laptop computers and booklets. At one employer's premises, MTL uses a member of the employer's staff to act as an interpreter during training and progress reviews. **Resources for lift truck training are particularly good but are poor for learners on the vehicle body repair training programme.**

13. **Induction and initial assessment are thorough.** The results of the initial assessment are used to place learners on the most appropriate training programme and to plan their training.

14. **The monitoring of learners' progress is good and particularly good in engineering motor vehicle studies.** MTL has a monitoring system that requires learners, employers and MTL's staff to discuss any targets set at previous progress reviews and to agree new targets for their progress. In engineering and business administration, learners' individual learning plans are updated after each progress review but this is not the case for all retailing and customer service and transportation learners.

15. There is a satisfactory range of qualifications available in all areas of learning. The main qualifications available provide a good base from which learners can progress. The additional qualifications available, particularly on the retailing and customer service training programmes, provide learners with new skills relevant to their job roles.

16. **There is particularly good support for learners.** MTL quickly identifies any literacy and numeracy support needs a learner may have and ensures that the results of these tests are shared with all training staff to ensure individual learning needs are being met. A qualified member of staff co-ordinates all learning support arrangements and also works closely with learners to improve retention rates and learners' progression through the qualification.

Leadership and management

17. **The management of change is effective.** MTL is involved in a number of innovative approaches to develop and improve the training programmes. For example, the company produces simplified information about the qualifications offered for employers and learners and allows learners to try out the training programme before making their career choice.

18. Changes introduced to reduce the number of learners leaving their training programme without achieving all the targets on their individual learning plan have been effective. Fewer learners now leave MTL without achieving all the targets on their individual learning plan. For example, the proportion of learners leaving their training programme without achieving all the targets on their individual learning plan was 28 per cent for the first six months of 2001-02 and fell to 15 per cent for the same period of 2002-03. Staff appraisal and development is focused on improving the training programmes and the experience of the learner.

19. There is increasingly good use of feedback from learners, data and other useful information to improve the training programme and plan for the future. However, the company's plans, targets and other related information about the learners is not communicated well to the company's staff or employers. Internal communication arrangements are too informal.

20. MTL has comprehensive arrangements for the quality assurance of the training it provides. Nearly all aspects of MTL's work are reviewed every year. All quality assurance arrangements link into the updating of MTL's self-assessment report and business plan. The quality assurance arrangements used to verify the assessment process require assessments to be thorough and well planned.

21. Resources are well managed. Learners do not have to wait for equipment. Assessments are carefully planned to maximise the assessment opportunities in the training centre. However, **there is insufficient planning to ensure that evidence for assessment is collected from the workplace.** Employers are included in the progress review process but have insufficient understanding of the qualification requirements or assessment arrangements.

22. MTL promotes equality of opportunity well. New induction arrangements and good promotion of equality of opportunity at learners' progress reviews have increased learners' understanding of equal opportunities topics. Activities to widen participation in learning and to promote learning opportunities at MTL to the wider community are developing well. An increasing number of MTL's learners are recruited from minority ethnic communities. Staff training in equality and diversity is satisfactory. However, employers do not receive enough guidance about equality of opportunity. MTL does not pay enough attention to employers' equal opportunities practices.

23. MTL has a satisfactory self-assessment process, which is clearly linked to its planning process. Staff understand the importance of self-assessment, even though they do not always have extensive involvement in the production of the self-assessment report. Surveys of learners' and employers' views are taken into account when writing the self-assessment report.

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

Leadership and management

Strengths

- effective management of change
- innovative approaches to training programme and curriculum development
- effective strategies to keep learners in training and promote progression through the qualification
- good arrangements for staff development
- good initial assessment
- good arrangements to support learners' literacy and numeracy needs
- good promotion of equality of opportunity
- broad range of initiatives to widen participation in learning
- comprehensive arrangements for quality assurance

Weaknesses

- insufficient guidance for employers regarding support arrangements
- over-reliance on informal methods of communication
- insufficient monitoring of employers' arrangements for equality of opportunity
- insufficient analysis of equal opportunities data for planning and target-setting purposes
- unclear contractual obligations

Engineering, technology & manufacturing

Strengths

- good and improving retention rates on modern apprenticeship training programmes
- good progression by learners through the modern apprenticeship framework
- very effective monitoring of learners' progress through their qualification

Weaknesses

- inadequate resources for off-the-job vehicle body training
- no links between on- and off-the-job training activities

Business administration, management & professional

Strengths

- innovative use of computer-based learning resources

Weaknesses

- poor retention and achievement rates for learners on the foundation modern apprenticeship training programme
- late introduction of key skills training to the programme

Retailing, customer service & transportation

Strengths

- particularly good resources
- broad range of additional qualifications carried out by most learners
- good lift truck training
- good performance on the SJFT programme

Weaknesses

- slow progression and completion rates for learners on modern apprenticeship training programmes
- poor involvement by learners in portfolio-building
- poor use of individual learning plans for most learners

DETAILED REINSPECTION FINDINGS

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

Grade 2

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

Strengths

- effective management of change
- innovative approaches to training programme and curriculum development
- effective strategies to keep learners in training and promote progression through the qualification
- good arrangements for staff development
- good initial assessment
- good arrangements to support learners' literacy and numeracy needs
- good promotion of equality of opportunity
- broad range of initiatives to widen participation in learning
- comprehensive arrangements for quality assurance

Weaknesses

- insufficient guidance for employers regarding support arrangements
- over-reliance on informal methods of communication
- insufficient monitoring of employers' arrangements for equality of opportunity
- insufficient analysis of equal opportunities data for planning and target-setting purposes
- unclear contractual obligations

24. MTL's management of change is effective. A significant number of improvements have been introduced since the previous inspection. MTL's response to the previous inspection findings has shown strong and sustained improvements against all the leadership and management weaknesses identified. All the previous leadership and management weakness are now satisfactory or good. Nearly all weakness identified at the previous inspection across all three areas of learning have been resolved. The company has demonstrated its ability to improve retention and qualification progression rates, and has improved its grade in engineering and the grades across all aspects of leadership and management including equality of opportunity and quality assurance. MTL has a clear strategic plan and a three-year development plan. The strategic and development plans are based on a local and regional labour market analysis and the outcomes of the self-assessment process. Many staff are new and they are effectively involved in the changes the company is making. The executive director welcomes and encourages staff proposals for improvement and change. Staff regularly contribute ideas for development and are committed and enthusiastic. Investment in the development

and use of computer-based learning resources have been effective in improving learning, initial assessment and the provision of learning support. MTL plans to discontinue its business administration training and concentrate on more successful programmes. This has not reduced MTL's efforts to improve the training programme for existing learners. MTL has introduced an action plan to improve the business administration training programme and many of these actions have enabled a better learning experience for these learners. However, MTL was slow to resolve some difficult staffing problems.

25. MTL has used a number of innovative approaches to develop its training programmes and the curriculum. A development programme for workplace supervisors effectively develops their confidence and skills to work more closely with learners in the workplace. MTL is piloting a set of streamlined occupational standards in warehousing. The pilot group of learners takes significantly more responsibility for their learning and the assessment process. Their progress through the qualification is good. Digital recording contributes effectively to the compilation of a 'paperless portfolio'. The career advancement programme provides young learners with a range of work and learning experiences at the beginning of their training programme. Their ability to succeed in the qualification is closely monitored. Learners on the career advancement programme make more informed choices about their career and have a good awareness of their career options. A partnership project with a local college provides school pupils with planned work experience and the opportunity to complete an NVQ at level 1 in motor vehicle maintenance. Of the 15 pupils who started on this work experience, 10 have progressed to the second year to achieve their qualification.

26. Strategies to reduce the proportion of learners leaving their training programme without achieving all the targets on their individual learning plan have been effective. Two members of MTL's staff have overall responsibility for the provision of learning support and the monitoring of retention rates and learners' progression. New systems have been introduced to help MTL identify potential problems that may lead to learners leaving the training programme without achieving all their targets. For example, a 'traffic light' system is used for learners and employers. The system uses indicators such as slow qualification progress, poor attitude at work, poor attendance and punctuality and poor employer involvement in the learners' training. MTL's training advisers assess the risk to the learners' training in each case and colour code learners' files according to the risk identified. Support is then targeted at those learners and employers whose training is identified as being at risk of disruption. Learners have been moved from unsatisfactory employers to avoid further disruption to their training programme. The new system for risk assessment which is linked to new initial assessment, induction and pastoral support arrangements has helped to improve retention rates on most training programmes. The proportion of learners leaving their training programme without achieving all the targets on their individual learning plan was 28 per cent for the first six months of 2001-02 and fell to 15 per cent for the same period of 2002-03. This proportion further reduced by 50 per cent for the second half of 2002-03. Learners have a good awareness of career progression. In business administration, approximately 33 per cent of learners have achieved either internal promotion or progressed to better jobs with a new employer.

27. Staff appraisal and development remains a strong and well-established feature of

MTL's continuous improvement strategy. Most staff are engaged in staff development, through external courses, qualifications, in-house training, coaching or mentoring. Some members of staff have made good progress into more senior posts at MTL. Staff development is closely linked to MTL's business objectives and its strategic development. For example, MTL has introduced a staff development programme to complement the business strategy relating to literacy, numeracy and language support.

28. MTL's approach to supporting the development of all new learners' literacy and numeracy skills is good. All prospective learners have their literacy and numeracy skills tested and support needs are identified. MTL ensures that the results of these tests are shared with all training staff so they can meet with learners' individual learning and support needs. MTL is keen to continue to support learners after their funding and planned duration of training has finished to enable them to complete their qualification. MTL is committed to ensuring learners receive appropriate support for the duration of their training programme. MTL uses a range of initial assessment techniques to identify learners' key skills, employability and their literacy, numeracy and language skills. MTL is committed to ensuring that all staff who provide support with these skills are competent and qualified to do so. MTL has a staff development programme to improve these skills in the company. However, the company does not provide employers with sufficient guidance about how they can be included in the provision of support for learners. MTL does not identify to employers, through its contracting arrangements, any clear or coherent message about how an employer should support learners' progress towards a qualification or in the development of any identified problem with learners' literacy, numeracy or language skills.

29. The use of information and data has improved since the previous inspection. Learners' and employers' views are now routinely sought. MTL's new data system now provides managers and staff with a wide range of reports that monitor training and learners' progress. Much of this information and data are new and MTL does not yet fully evaluate or use it to help with its target-setting and action-planning processes.

30. Resources are satisfactory. Classroom accommodation is adequate. There is an appropriate number of staff for the number of learners in training. Many of MTL's staff are new, keen, enthusiastic and in possession of an individual learning plan, but some are not yet fully qualified. There are good computer-based learning resources and specialist equipment for lift truck training. The resources for the vehicle body repair training programme are inadequate and are not those used to produce good work in industry.

31. MTL relies too much on informal methods of communication. Record-keeping from internal meetings is weak. Some records are simply a list of action points, with no linked timescales. It is not clear if action points are followed up at subsequent meetings. Some teams do not keep notes of their meetings. The communication between teams, and how information is communicated to the rest of the company is not clear. Some staff have not seen a copy of the three-year development plan. Employers do not have sufficient information about some key aspects of the training process. The company's marketing plan is weak. There is no recognition of the needs of different audiences or analysis of the relative costs and benefits of marketing.

32. Contractual obligations between MTL and employers are unclear. The contract comprises a signed document together with a very well prepared and detailed employers' guide that expands MTL's and the employers' responsibilities as outlined in the contract. However, the status of this guide is not clear in the contract. Few employers use the guide. Current contracting arrangements fail to clarify who should be responsible for and manage important information about learners, such as copies of individual learning plans and occupational standards. In some cases, the most appropriate person at the employers' organisation is not receiving this information.

Equality of opportunity

Contributory grade 3

33. MTL has developed good links with local community groups, schools and careers service. The company attends careers fairs and promotes its training provision through information sheets and publicity material that have been designed to show positive images, and include success stories and encouraging comments from past learners. Information about training is not available in languages other than English. MTL prepares a weekly article in the local newsletter for Asian leaders. MTL uses this article to promote courses and regularly advertises jobs which are linked to training. MTL provides training in three vocational areas of learning. There is good promotion of equality of opportunity during learners' induction. MTL's staff use a range of carefully prepared literature and information to explore race, gender, diversity and disability topics. Learners' progress reviews include a further opportunity for MTL's staff to consider and promote equality topics. Learners' progress reviews are also used to establish how well learners are treated at work. Where problems occur, MTL is quick to respond and resolve them to the satisfaction of all parties. All learners clearly understand who they should contact and what procedures to follow if they have a complaint or problem with their training programmes. Staff recruitment procedures are in place and MTL has new policies to deal with equality of opportunity, bullying and harassment.

34. MTL is engaged in good initiatives to widen participation in learning. The company provides motor vehicle training for an NVQ at level 1 for a group of school pupils, some of whom are not progressing well at school. These learners are being encouraged to continue training and progress onto a modern apprenticeship training programme. MTL also provides training and work tasters for other schools as part of a local youth inclusion project. MTL is involved in a local project to promote the transportation and logistics industry and improve the public's perception of it. This project provides careers advisers, potential learners and parents with clear advice about career paths in this sector. The proportion of learners recruited to MTL's training programmes from minority ethnic communities has increased steadily over the past three years from 5 per cent in 2000-01 to 9 per cent in 2002-03. Over the same period, the proportion of female learners has decreased from 16 to 12 per cent.

35. Approximately 45 per cent of the employers linked to MTL have been questioned about their equal opportunities arrangements and plans are in place to review those remaining employers. However, MTL has not collected the necessary information to monitor whether there are effective measures to eliminate oppressive behaviour and

harassment. This is not acknowledged as a weakness in the self-assessment report. MTL does not use the extensive equal opportunities data it has to better plan its recruitment programme, contribute to its research into why learners leave training without achieving all the targets on their individual learning plan or to examine trends in achievement and progression based on gender, ethnicity and ability.

Quality assurance

Contributory grade 3

36. MTL has developed comprehensive arrangements for quality assurance since the previous inspection. The company has an annual quality assurance cycle which links into self-assessment and business-planning. There are carefully prepared procedures to control and quality assure training as well as other organisational activities. A planned annual schedule of internal audits uses a range of performance indicators to evaluate the company's performance. The internal audit is beginning to identify action points for the company's continuous improvement.

37. Arrangements for the co-ordination of internal verification are particularly effective. All documents are carefully prepared and used consistently by all staff. The lead internal verifier maintains a detailed overview of all internal verification practices through a quarterly computer-based analysis. Arrangements for assessment and internal verification in areas of learning are satisfactory. Assessors and internal verifiers meet to standardise assessment practices and share staff development activities and good practice. Action points are raised at these meetings and problems are followed up quickly.

38. The collection and use of feedback is satisfactory. The company collects feedback from learners and employers. Responses are analysed, and the results are circulated. This feedback is starting to contribute to the company's continuous improvement. For example, results from a questionnaire for learners indicated that only 20 per cent were happy with their workplace supervisor's involvement in their progress reviews. In response to this, MTL introduced the development programme for workplace supervisors. Eighty per cent of learners are now happy with their workplace supervisor's involvement in progress reviews.

39. The self-assessment process is satisfactory. The self-assessment report has a good balance of self-critical judgements. The annual cycle of self-assessment is described in terms of quality assurance practices. The report is clearly written and identifies many strengths and weaknesses identified by inspectors. Grades given in the self-assessment report are broadly similar to those given by inspectors. However, some staff are new and have not yet been fully involved in self-assessment.

AREAS OF LEARNING

Engineering, technology & manufacturing

Grade 2

Programmes inspected	Number of learners	Contributory grade
Work-based learning for young people	45	2

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

Strengths

- good and improving retention rates on modern apprenticeship training programmes
- good progression by learners through the modern apprenticeship framework
- very effective monitoring of learners' progress through their qualification

Weaknesses

- inadequate resources for off-the-job vehicle body training
- no links between on- and off-the-job training activities

Achievement and standards

40. Retention rates are good and improving on all training programmes. The retention rate for learners studying for a modern apprenticeship has improved from 44 per cent in 2001-02 to 87 per cent in 2002-03. A series of improvements to the programme has increased the proportion of learners who remain in training and the rate at which they progress through the qualification. For example, MTL has employed a retention officer to work closely with the engineering tutors to monitor attendance and progress, and the company has adopted a more routine approach to identifying learners' support needs at the start of their training programme. MTL has also introduced more frequent visits to learners in their workplace by training officers, to carry out progress reviews and assessment. Employers and workplace supervisors are also more involved in progress reviews. Learners and employers are now also set incentives for the learner to complete the modern apprenticeship framework. MTL also now has well-organised arrangements for key skills. Learners' portfolios have improved and learners are now making good progress towards achievement of their qualification.

41. One of the problems linked to poor framework completion rates on the foundation modern apprenticeship training programme was the way in which MTL used this programme as a progression route onto the advanced modern apprenticeship training programme. While this provided a clear and quick route for progress, should the learner show promise, it inevitably undermined the success of the foundation modern apprenticeship training programme. MTL is aware of this anomaly and now only offers this progression route to learners once they have completed all aspects of their

foundation modern apprenticeship training programme.

Quality of education and training

42. MTL has a very effective system to monitor learners' progress through their qualification. This system requires learners, employers and MTL's staff to discuss any targets set at previous progress reviews and to agree new targets for their progress. Action is taken to deal with any incidence of slow progress. Staff now use a detailed monitoring system which includes all aspects of the NVQ, key skills, workplace assessments and additional evidence required to achieve units or qualifications. Learners can now review their progress quickly and they know what targets they have been set and what evidence they still have to produce. Training officers can also use this system as a quick reference. The learners' personal tutor and MTL's basic skills tutor have copies of learners' monitoring systems. Learners and employers now have a greater understanding of the evidence and assessment requirements for the qualification.

43. Learners' workplaces provide a wide range of training opportunities. To help maximise the learning opportunities at work, learners can choose which NVQ units they wish to do as part of their training programme. Learners acquire a wide range of skills through their use of modern machinery, a comprehensive range of tools and equipment in the workplace. Learners consider that they receive good training in the workplace and that their courses are now well organised and managed.

44. Employers and MTL's training officers provide learners with good support. Employers help learners with personal and financial problems as well as helping them to provide good evidence for the NVQ. For example, one learner who needed money was told by his employer that he could work as much overtime as he needed to earn the money required. This same employer carries out training and skills development. Other companies move learners around the organisation to develop new skills or to gain experience and evidence for specific aspects of the qualification. MTL helps learners with a wide range of problems. Some of the personal help is recorded, although more sensitive problems are not. Learners are encouraged to contact training advisers when assessment opportunities arise at work. One training adviser has his own working garage where learners can be placed if they cannot find employment or a suitable work placement. Employers and training officers have, in some cases, spoken to learners' parents when they have been having problems with the learner. New learners have their literacy and numeracy support needs identified early in the training programme. For those learners with an identified learning support need, MTL provides additional learning resources in the form of workbooks, projects and access to specialist staff in the training centre. MTL's training advisers can also support learners in the workplace by using a laptop computer with literacy and numeracy support software.

45. MTL's training centre is small, but satisfactory for mechanical training. Teaching in the training centre is satisfactory or better. Teaching staff are skilled at involving all learners in discussions and in question and answer sessions. Learners complete a questionnaire at the end of each day in the training centre. This feedback indicates that

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learners are now happier with the teaching they receive and they are now confident and feel they are progressing well. Learners have a very good working relationship with their training officers and enjoy the time spent in the training centre. MTL has improved its induction programme since the previous inspection. Most learners can remember the main topics covered at induction.

46. Assessors visit learners in the workplace every four weeks to carry out assessment. These visits include a discussion with the learner about targets to be met before the next assessment visit. Assessment practices are satisfactory. The assessor completes the documents required by the awarding body. Good feedback is given to learners. MTL has introduced new progress review paperwork. Progress reviews are thorough and include action-planning. Not all workplace supervisors take part in the progress review process. Supervisors do however discuss learners' progress with the training officer. When reviewing progress or carrying out assessments, training officers also review the progress which learners have made with their portfolio and will encourage learners to use new evidence and update the system monitoring their progress. Learners' individual learning plans are updated when necessary during the progress review process. Health and safety checks are carried out on the employers' premises every three months.

47. The workshop facilities for vehicle body training are inadequate. Work areas for this training programme are shared with learners studying vehicle mechanics. This allows oils and greases to contaminate finished paint work. There are no suitable work-benches for body repair work and there is insufficient tooling to carry out training in body repair work to a good standard. There are no painting facilities, however training officers do have access to a local employer's body repair workshop.

Leadership and management

48. Internal verification is satisfactory. However, MTL has no documents indicating that assessors have been accompanied to the workplace to observe assessment practice.

49. All new learners are subject to diagnostic initial assessment. Learners identified as requiring support with literacy or numeracy are referred to a qualified basic skills co-ordinator for further screening tests. These tests determine the learners' learning support needs. MTL arranges surgeries each week to help learners' with literacy and numeracy support needs. Individual tuition is also arranged. Learners requiring help are making good progress. Management of the programme is satisfactory.

50. Staff have been involved in the production of the self-assessment report which is detailed, generally accurate and informative. MTL had identified many of the weaknesses that inspectors found during the inspection. Training officers are not set targets for retention and achievement.

51. Recent staff training has taken place to familiarise all staff with the new arrangements for equality of opportunity and the new documents and procedures relating to learners' progress reviews.

52. Co-ordination of most on-the-job training is poorly managed. Links occur by chance rather than by agreement. This weakness was not accurately recognised in the self-assessment report. Workplace supervisors are well qualified in their occupational area and are suitably experienced. Few employees in the learners' workplaces, however, have received training in methods of instruction, work-based recording or assessment. These staff have insufficient knowledge of the qualification or assessment requirements.

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

Programmes inspected	Number of learners	Contributory grade
Work-based learning for young people	18	4
Work-based learning for adults	1	None

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

Strengths

- innovative use of computer-based learning resources

Weaknesses

- poor retention and achievement rates for learners on the foundation modern apprenticeship training programme
- late introduction of key skills training to the programme

Achievement and standards

53. There has been an 18 per cent increase in the proportion of learners completing the modern apprenticeship framework. Forty-four per cent of learners have achieved their NVQ and 62 per cent of learners have achieved some units. Completion rates for the foundation modern apprenticeship in business administration are poor. This weakness is unchanged since the previous inspection and MTL has recognised this in its development plan. Too many learners have been on the training programme for several years and have made very slow progress. Retention rates are poor but improving, and the number of learners leaving training without achieving all the targets on their individual learning plan has decreased by 50 per cent in the past year. MTL has developed good employment opportunities for learners and many learners have progressed or gained promotion at work. The progress which learners are making towards their target qualification is satisfactory and improving.

Quality of education and training

54. MTL uses innovative computer-based learning resources. Since the previous inspection, MTL has improved the resources it uses to teach the background knowledge aspect of the qualification. The company uses an extensive range of innovative computer-based learning resources covering the whole of the business administration NVQ. The resources allow tutors to provide individual training for each learner for the whole of the qualification and learners can work on the resources at work, home or at MTL's training centre. These resources have been developed by MTL and are now used effectively for individual training and coaching. Occasional group classroom sessions are provided to meet a specific learning need. There has been significant staff turnover in

the department. However, current staff are appropriately qualified and experienced.

55. Assessors visit learners every two to four weeks in the workplace. Learners' progress reviews have improved since the previous inspection and MTL's staff now take care to make the progress reviews more focused on learners' progress through the qualification by setting individual targets and by reviewing previously set targets to gauge learners' and employers' commitment to progress. However, learners do not have a sense of urgency to complete the work within the duration of training specified on their individual learning plans. A wide range of assessment methods is used, including observation of performance, product evidence, professional discussion, personal accounts and witness statements. All learners were able to use the evidence gained from their working environment to meet all the requirements of the NVQ. Most portfolios are good with the work well organised and neatly presented. Learners have a good understanding of the NVQ, as identified during the previous inspection.

56. Induction is satisfactory, but learners considered that it was not a memorable or exciting experience. The need for a new induction programme was identified during the previous inspection and MTL has now introduced new arrangements for new learners.

57. Key skills training is not an integral feature of the training programme. This aspect of the training programme has deteriorated since the previous inspection. MTL has introduced new arrangements for the initial assessment of literacy and numeracy. The results of the initial assessment are used to identify learners with additional learning support needs. These new arrangements apply mostly to learners starting a training programme. MTL has not as yet completed its objective to review these learning needs for existing learners. Currently, a small number of learners on business administration training programmes do not receive the literacy support they need. Several of MTL's staff will be starting training to provide literacy and numeracy support in the next few months. Some employers do not fully understand how to help learners fulfil the requirements of the NVQ and believe that they could help learners make faster and more effective progress if they had this information.

Leadership and management

58. MTL has managed its relationship with employers well. MTL provides good employment opportunities for learners. All learners are employed, and many have been promoted and have progressed into management positions with their employers. Financial support has been provided by MTL's management to enable staff to develop computer-based learning materials and purchase computers for learners who do not have their own equipment at home. Business administration was unsatisfactory at the previous inspection. MTL has not recruited any learners to this training programme since the previous inspection and plans to discontinue it.

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

Programmes inspected	Number of learners	Contributory grade
Work-based learning for adults	131	3
Work-based learning for young people	92	3
New Deal 25+ and work-based learning for adults	5	3

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

Strengths

- particularly good resources
- broad range of additional qualifications carried out by most learners
- good lift truck training
- good performance on the SJFT programme

Weaknesses

- slow progression and completion rates for learners on modern apprenticeship training programmes
- poor involvement by learners in portfolio-building
- poor use of individual learning plans for most learners

Achievement and standards

59. Achievement rates for the NVQ on the specialist plant training programmes is good at 66 per cent. This training programme represents approximately 50 per cent of the learners on training programmes in this area of learning. However, completion rates for learners on the modern apprenticeship programmes are poor. Despite improvements since the previous inspection there is still slow progress towards the completion of modern apprenticeship frameworks. One learner who is working towards a foundation modern apprenticeship in customer service is still in training after three years on the programme. Another learner who has been in training since July 2002 has had his training programme extended until October 2003. MTL has improved the monitoring of learners' progress, has initial assessment and support arrangements for new learners and now places greater importance on the identification of learners who are at risk of leaving the programme without achieving all the targets on their individual learning plan. Retention rates in this area of learning have improved. For example, retention rates for learners on the modern apprenticeship training programme have increased from 33 per cent to 80 per cent since the previous inspection. MTL has a policy to support learners beyond their expected completion date until they achieve their qualification. Some learners' completion date is extended without any additional funding for MTL.

Quality of education and training

60. Resources are particularly good in this area of learning. MTL's staff work to a good industry standard and are occupationally competent for the qualifications for which they provide training. Learning support booklets have been produced for some learners. These are available in hard copy and on CD-ROM. The booklets are well laid out and contain diagrams, coloured pages and plenty of illustrations and are easy to use. Learners like to use the booklets. There are particularly good resources available for the lift truck training programme. For example, there are five warehouse bays laid out for lift truck training which means learners are always able to access this resource for training and assessment purposes. Lift trucks are modern and fit for the purpose. The bays are well lit and maintained. Lift truck learners get the opportunity to develop their skills in an active warehouse. Learners use a large pad to practise reversing skills before taking their large goods vehicle (LGV) training and assessment. There are two LGV vehicles available for driving instruction and for assessment purposes. Classrooms are comfortable and fitted with learning support materials.

61. There is a good range of additional qualifications offered to learners on logistics training programmes. All learners on the specialised plant and machinery operations training programme can gain a lift truck qualification. Most learners have successfully achieved this qualification. Learners can also work towards manual handling, fire safety and fuel management awards and a category C driving licence. Participation in these courses is good.

62. Lift truck training is good. Learners use both reach and counterbalance trucks for training. The training area is clean, spacious, well laid out and is fit for the purpose. The lighting is good and the trucks are modern and well maintained. The instructors, who are well qualified and experienced, are calm and supportive. They give clear instructions and advice about lift truck positions and manoeuvres. There are suitable pauses in instruction to allow learners to reflect on their learning and ask questions. Most learners pass the lift truck basic certificate. Learners are confident and have a good commitment to work. Attendance and punctuality are satisfactory.

63. MTL's SJFT programme lasts for two weeks. Eighty per cent of the training is focused on the acquisition of a lift truck licence. There is also some jobsearch. MTL selects all applicants on the grounds of either having a car licence, previous experience in a warehouse or on their readiness for work. Retention rates on the programme are good. Initial assessment includes an interview, an application form and an aptitude test. Since November 2002, 94 learners have been placed on the SJFT training programme, of which 75 have completed the two-week programme. There is a good achievement rate for the lift truck licence. Sixty-eight learners have gained two licenses, while a further nine have gained one licence. Resources are very good. Jobsearch arrangements are very practical. Two of the current five clients have already secured interviews. Another is waiting to hear back from an employer. Instructors are well qualified and have a good relationship with learners. The proportion of clients securing employment during the training programme is satisfactory. Approximately 25 per cent of clients gain

employment while in training compared with the contractual target of 45 per cent.

64. MTL takes care to select employers that can provide learners with good training. MTL's training advisers build strong partnerships with employers to maximise learners' skills development at work. Most employers provide learners with an effective on-the-job training programme. In these companies, learners have time set aside for the development of their portfolios. Most of the learning sessions observed in this area of learning were good or better.

65. At one large employer, MTL is training staff to become work-based assessors so there is greater flexibility for learners as there would be in-house assessment arrangements. MTL is also currently offering training for workplace supervisors to help them understand their role in supporting learners' progression through the qualification. MTL is currently piloting a system whereby the learners' workplace 'buddy' can work towards an NVQ at level 2 at the same time as the learner. All learners on the specialised plant and machinery operations training programme attend MTL's training centre at the beginning of their training programme to do a five-day lift truck training course. Successful learners receive a lift truck driving licence. Learners reported that they found the course very interesting and value that there is only a small number of learners in each group allowing them sufficient time to practise their operating skills on the lift truck.

66. Learners recognise the value of the training and are well motivated to work towards their qualification. All progress reviews are well-structured and take place every 12 weeks. The progress reviews are focused on monitoring and challenging learners' progress. They include clear actions for the next period and set realistic goals. Workplace visits are frequent and many take place outside normal working hours to accommodate learners' shift patterns.

67. Training advisers visit learners in their workplace every four weeks, or more frequently if required. The visits are planned in advance with the learner and employer to enable the observation of the learner doing practical tasks. Assessors plan these visits to maximise the assessment opportunities at each visit. At the end of each visit, the assessors provide learners with detailed feedback about their progress, and identify specific short-term targets for the next visit. Learners value this feedback. At the beginning of each visit previously set targets are reviewed and discussed and, when necessary, renegotiated. Sometimes the targets relate to the provision of practical skills training from the employer. Training advisers are provided with laptop computers and they provide learners with key skills training in the workplace. They also carry out satisfactory initial diagnostic assessment and support for literacy and numeracy.

68. As identified during the previous inspection, learners are insufficiently involved in portfolio-building. Much of the cross-referencing of evidence in the portfolios is done by MTL's training advisers on behalf of the learner. Some portfolios are kept in the training centre and are only used by the learner during assessments and during progress reviews. Some learners are unable to access their portfolios to gather the relevant information. This situation does not occur on the warehousing training programme, as learners keep

their own portfolios and are responsible for the cross-referencing of evidence under the guidance of their training adviser.

69. There is poor use of individual learning plans. Individual learning plans are not used as a working document for all learners, they are rarely referred to in the progress review process. When they are used, MTL's master copy is used, which is not always up to date. Employers are not involved with, and do not have a copy of, the learners' individual learning plan. Learners do not receive a copy of the individual learning plan and few have any knowledge of its content. On the warehousing training programme, the individual learning plans are used more satisfactorily and they are updated to reflect the learners' progress and record any additional support needs.

Leadership and management

70. The management of learning programmes is good and improving. There are good arrangements to monitor learners' progress through their qualification. Progress records are used well to set individual targets for learners. MTL has good links with employers which include local independent traders and national high-street stores. MTL provides employers with information outlining the learning programmes and their role and responsibilities. MTL encourages good development of skills at work through their careful choice of employer and work-placement providers. MTL has good access to learners at work for assessment purposes and has kept learners and employers fully informed of recent staffing changes.

71. MTL recognises that learners' mentors and supervisors at work are rarely qualified and few understand the qualifications which the learners are working towards. To help improve these arrangements, MTL is running a pilot training programme that aims to provide supervisors with similar qualifications to the learners, creating a better understanding of the requirements for work-based learners in their companies.

72. Managers encourage new employees at MTL to gain assessor qualifications as well as develop their skills both occupationally and as tutors. These developments are recorded during the individual staff reviews and through the appraisal process.