

REINSPECTION REPORT

Rocket Training Ltd Reinspection

04 March 2004



ADULT LEARNING
INSPECTORATE

ROCKET TRAINING LTD REINSPECTION

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

Rocket Training Ltd Reinspection

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REINSPECTION REPORT

DESCRIPTION OF THE PROVIDER

1. Rocket Training Limited (RTL) was founded as the Brothers of Charity Youth Training Workshop in 1981. The organisation was restructured and renamed in 1992 as Rocket Training. In 1994, the organisation became a limited company.
2. Following the previous inspection, one of the directors left RTL and it is now owned by the remaining director. There are a total of 36 other staff, of whom only one is part-time. RTL has training centres on five sites, including one on the Wirral. There are 187 learners on work-based learning programmes for young people and a significant number of learners on Entry to Employment (E2E) and a range of 14-16 programmes. RTL provides E2E under subcontracting arrangement and this was not inspected. The company has recently recruited a small number of learners on a sports training programme. There were too few learners for this provision to be inspected.
3. RTL contracts solely with Greater Merseyside Learning and Skills Council (LSC) for work-based learning, providing national vocational qualifications (NVQs) at levels 1, 2, and 3, and foundation and advanced modern apprenticeships in engineering, technology and manufacturing, business administration, management and professional, retailing, customer services and transportation and hospitality, sports, leisure and travel. RTL provides on-the-job training and assessment in its learning centres and uses subcontractors for some of its programmes. Currently, five subcontractors including colleges of further education and one employer, are used for off-the-job training and assessment. RTL is a member of two local provider networks that meet monthly to share good practice and plan joint initiatives and developments to support learners.
4. RTL recruits its learners from Liverpool and Knowsley. Both these areas have suffered a significant decline in employment in recent years, particularly in the manufacturing and transport industries. Liverpool is ranked as the fifth and Knowsley as the third most deprived areas in the UK. In August 2003, the unemployment rate for Liverpool was 5.4 per cent and in Knowsley was 4.4 per cent, compared with the national average of 2.5 per cent. In 2003, the proportion of school leavers achieving five or more general certificates of secondary education at grade C or above in Liverpool was 41.3 per cent and Knowsley was 33.4 per cent, compared with the national average of 52.9 per cent. The proportion of people from minority ethnic groups in Liverpool is 5.7 per cent and in Knowsley is 1.6 per cent, compared with 9.1 per cent nationally.

SCOPE OF PROVISION

Engineering, technology & manufacturing

5. There are currently 49 learners on motor vehicle programmes and 18 learners on engineering and manufacturing programmes. Of the 49 motor vehicle learners, 44 are foundation modern apprentices, two are advanced modern apprentices and three are

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working towards NVQs only at level 2. Of the 18 engineering and manufacturing learners, 10 are foundation modern apprentices and eight are working towards NVQs only at level 2. For the motor vehicle programmes, 35 work-placement providers and employers provide learners with on-the-job training including vehicle fitting, fast fit operations, auto electrical; and vehicle maintenance and repair at levels 1 to 3 comprising vehicle valeting, body repair and refinishing. All off-the-job training is subcontracted to three local further education colleges. Learners on manufacturing operations are placed with a number of small manufacturing companies, but RTL carries out all on-the-job assessments as well as the key skills training that takes place in one of its learning centres. All learners are visited in the workplace every two to three weeks and formal progress reviews are carried out every six weeks. All learners are men and 56 per cent have additional learning needs.

Business administration, management & professional

6. There are 51 foundation modern apprentices and eight advanced modern apprentices on business administration, management and professional programmes. Most learners are in full-time employment or on work placement. All learners receive an interview and an initial assessment and key skills diagnostic tests. Most learners are referred through the Connexions service and some are self-referrals following recommendations from other learners. All learners attend the learning centres for one day each week for off-the-job training, technical certificates and key skills training, portfolio-building and assessment. RTL carries out all on-the-job assessment. All learners are visited in the workplace every two to three weeks and formal progress reviews are carried out every six weeks.

Retailing, customer service & transportation

7. There are eight advanced modern apprentices, 41 foundation modern apprentices and three learners are working towards NVQs only in retailing, customer service and transportation. There are 42 learners following retailing and warehousing programmes and 10 learners on customer service programmes. Most learners are employed and the rest are on work placement. Learners are recruited through local advertising, Connexions services, self-referrals and through their employer. Training is provided in the workplace by employers, work-placement providers or RTL's staff. All assessment is carried out in the workplace. All learners are visited in the workplace every three weeks and formal progress reviews are carried out every six weeks.

ABOUT THE REINSPECTION

Number of inspectors	6
Number of inspection days	24
Number of learner interviews	48
Number of staff interviews	19
Number of employer interviews	21
Number of subcontractor interviews	5
Number of locations/sites/learning centres visited	5
Number of partner/external agency interviews	1

OVERALL JUDGEMENT

8. The ALI's inspection in June 2003 found that training in engineering, technology and manufacturing, and in business administration, management and professional was unsatisfactory. Training in retailing, customer services and transportation, and foundation programmes was judged to be satisfactory. Leadership and management were found to be unsatisfactory, equality of opportunity satisfactory and quality assurance unsatisfactory. At reinspection, the quality of provision is adequate to meet the reasonable needs of those receiving it. More specifically, all aspects of the training provision are satisfactory or better.

GRADES

Grades awarded at previous inspection

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

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

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

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

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

Foundation programmes	3
Contributory grades:	
Life Skills	3

Grades awarded at reinspection

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

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

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

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

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

KEY FINDINGS

Achievement and standards

9. At the previous inspection, retention and achievement rates were poor for engineering learners. **The framework achievement rate is still poor for engineering learners.**

10. Learners develop good work-related skills. Employers and workplace providers allow learners to carry out tasks with minimum supervision.

11. Business administration learners’ portfolios are well structured and generally contain a wide range of workplace evidence. Work placements are well matched to learners’

needs and enable them to develop their self-confidence and acquire a range of relevant skills. Retention rates are satisfactory and are improving.

12. **Achievement rates are poor for business administration learners.** Only six learners have completed their framework since the previous inspection. Progress towards NVQ achievement is slow. Learners do, however, collect good evidence across a range of units.

13. **Retention rates are good for customer services and retailing learners.** Since the previous inspection, retention rates on retailing programmes have risen from 77 per cent in 2002-03 to 88 per cent in 2003-04.

14. **Modern apprenticeship achievement rates are poor in customer services and retailing.** No apprenticeship frameworks have been achieved in the past three years. However, this has started to improve. Progress toward framework achievement is slow. Many learners have been on programme for between five months and a year and have not achieved an NVQ unit.

Quality of education and training

15. **There are very effective links with engineering employers.** RTL is in regular contact with employers and work-placement providers who regularly contact them on specific issues.

16. **There are good resources in the companies used by RTL for training engineering learners.** In all cases the standard of equipment and vehicles used by learners is above the requirements of the NVQ.

17. **There is good support for engineering learners.** Assessors visit learners at least once a month and in some cases each week. Assessments are well planned and thorough. Evidence includes expert witness testimony, questions to determine learners' knowledge and direct observation.

18. **Progress reviews for engineering learners are very effective.** Learners' performance is analysed by all concerned and working relationships are discussed. Considerable time is spent on identifying training, clear targets are set and previous targets reviewed.

19. For engineering learners the subcontractor colleges and employers keep RTL up to date on issues including learners' timekeeping, attendance, coursework and progress. Employers understand the NVQ and the modern apprenticeship frameworks and arrange suitable workplace experience.

20. **Key skills training and assessment were not introduced at the start of the programme.** For some engineering learners. Some motor vehicle learners in their second and third year of training have only recently started their key skills. Following the previous inspection, RTL transferred these learners to another local college where the

learners now receive satisfactory key skills training.

21. **Initial assessment processes for business administration learners is particularly thorough and effective.** Potential learners complete initial literacy, numeracy and language and key skills diagnostic assessments before an interview. Additional learning needs are supported through the use of appropriate workbooks. A dedicated support tutor visits each learner in the workplace on a regular basis to provide individual support.

22. **In business administration there are very effective arrangements to identify and support at-risk learners.** Those learners identified to be at risk are provided with immediate support.

23. **Target-setting for business administration learners is ineffective.** Short-term targets are not always measurable and are not linked to long-term targets in the individual learning plans.

24. **Customer services and retailing learners develop their work skills effectively through effective on-the-job training provided by employers and workplace providers.** All learners are given induction training by their employers or work-placement providers. They are also thoroughly trained in all aspects of their job roles by managers and experienced colleagues. Some learners have access to structured company training programmes.

25. **Good use is made of recorded professional discussion for assessing retailing learners.** The evidence is matched to qualification standards and recordings are retained in learners' portfolios.

26. **Progress reviews for customer services and retailing learners are ineffective.** Some learners do not clearly remember their individual learning plan, as it is not routinely used by their assessor to review their progress. Although action plans are often used to record short-term targets for learners, some portfolios do not have enough action plans and do not always contain appropriate targets.

Leadership and management

27. **RTL has carried out good management actions to implement post-inspection action plans.** Following the previous inspection and the changes at directors' level, roles and responsibilities of staff were reviewed extensively and new staff are now responsible for some critical aspects of training.

28. RTL now receives regular reports from the subcontractors about the learners. Following the previous inspection, the learner support arrangements were reviewed and new working methods were developed and introduced to identify and support the learners at risk.

29. Partnership working is good. RTL now provides 14-19 provision and responds well

to the local training requirements. It also provides work placements for school pupils.

30. **Strategic management is strong.** Following a detailed analysis of its potential learners, and through discussions with some key local stakeholders, RTL has established learning centres located in deprived areas of Liverpool and Wirral. RTL is allocating significant resources to support this strategic direction. All the learning centres have managers and training staff. RTL also provides progression for its E2E learners who are subcontracted from a local college.

31. RTL has a thorough and effective management information system, which produces information about the learners in a timely manner on learners' gender, ethnicity, progress, retention and achievement rates.

32. The company's equality of opportunity policy is systematically reviewed and shared with staff and learners. RTL also informs the employers and work-placement providers about their responsibilities in relation to equal opportunities.

33. The information learners receive during induction has been extensively reviewed and updated. This is now very comprehensive and informs learners about their rights and responsibilities.

34. **RTL has a range of very effective initiatives to remove barriers to learning.** These include providing highly dedicated staff to provide additional support, establishing learning centres in areas where participation is low and involvement in projects that increase the number of learners from under-represented groups.

35. **Staff receive very good development in equality of opportunity.** Following equality of opportunity training the staff assess themselves in terms of their ability to discuss or engage with the learners' equal opportunity issues. Staff who do not feel sufficiently confident are offered further training.

36. RTL monitors equal opportunities to ensure employers and work-placement providers have an equal opportunities policy or use its own policy and procedures. RTL takes effective actions if the learners experience any equal opportunities issues, and monitors the impact of this intervention. Equality of opportunity is discussed effectively during progress reviews.

37. RTL has developed a comprehensive quality assurance policy and detailed procedures, for monitoring the key aspect of the training process. There is now a clear implementation plan and an auditing plan to monitor how each trainer provides different aspects of the training process.

38. Some aspects of the quality assurance system are not yet fully established and tested. The monitoring of key aspects of the training processes for all areas of learning has not been fully implemented.

39. During the previous inspection, internal verification was inadequate. Policies and

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procedures for internal verification are now effective and have identified some poor practices in aspects of some assessments.

40. The self-assessment process is thorough and effective. Staff are trained in how to carry out self-assessment through discussions and case studies.

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

Leadership and management

Strengths

- good management actions to implement post-inspection action plans
- good partnership working
- strong strategic management
- very effective initiatives to remove barriers to learning
- very good staff development in equality of opportunity

Weaknesses

- insufficient pace of improvements in improving achievement rates
- insufficiently established quality assurance improvements

Engineering, technology & manufacturing

Strengths

- very effective links with employers
- good workplace resources
- good learner support
- very effective progress reviews

Weaknesses

- poor framework achievement
- poor retention rates
- late introduction of key skills for some learners

Business administration, management & professional

Strengths

- particularly thorough and effective initial assessment process
- very effective identification and support for at-risk learners
- good monitoring of training processes

Weaknesses

- poor achievement rates
- slow progress towards NVQ achievements
- ineffective target-setting

Retailing, customer service & transportation

Strengths

- good retention rates
- very effective development of learners' skills through comprehensive on-the-job training
- good use of recorded professional discussions

Weaknesses

- poor achievement rates
- slow progress towards framework achievement
- ineffective progress reviews

DETAILED REINSPECTION FINDINGS

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

Grade 2

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

Strengths

- good management actions to implement post-inspection action plans
- good partnership working
- strong strategic management
- very effective initiatives to remove barriers to learning
- very good staff development in equality of opportunity

Weaknesses

- insufficient pace of improvements in improving achievement rates
- insufficiently established quality assurance improvements

41. RTL has carried out good management actions to implement post-inspection action plans. Following the previous inspection and the changes at director level, roles and responsibilities of staff were reviewed extensively and new staff are now responsible for some critical aspects of training. For example, a member of staff is now responsible for quality assurance and another member for developing working relationships with subcontractors. In the previous inspection, the management of subcontractors was identified as a weakness. RTL now receives regular reports about learners from the subcontractors. Learner support arrangements have been reviewed and new working methods were developed and introduced to identify and support learners at risk.

42. Partnership working is good. RTL now provides 14-19 learning programmes and responds appropriately to local training requirements. For example, RTL is currently offering provision in sports coaching, a need identified through its collaboration with the local LSC. It also provides work placements for some school pupils. The director chairs the local E2E partnership and the Knowsley provider network.

43. Strategic management is strong. Following a detailed analysis of its potential learners, and through discussions with some key local stakeholders, RTL has established learning centres in deprived areas of Liverpool and Wirral. It is allocating significant resources to support this strategic direction. All the learning centres have managers and training staff. RTL also provides progression for its E2E learners who are subcontracted from a local college. The business plan contains clear objectives and a range of performance measures in relation to its training. However, these are not explicitly related to learners' performance. All staff have a good understanding of these priorities and are very clear how they can contribute towards achieving them. The operations

manager reinforces these priorities on a regular basis and maintains a strong leadership in this area.

44. The management information system was judged to be weak at the previous inspection. The company now has a thorough and effective management information system that produces information on learners' gender, ethnicity, progress and retention, and achievement rates. RTL also has information about those learners at risk of leaving their learning programme early or not achieving. This information is used to monitor the effectiveness of the provider's actions.

45. Communications are effective. There are a range of operational and quality assurance meetings carried out on a regular basis. The meetings are well attended, and focus on the management, development and standard of the learning programmes. For example, learners' views are discussed and clear actions identified. Meetings are minuted and staff are kept up to date with developments and initiatives. Managers have good working relationships with staff and informal discussions with the management team take place on a regular basis.

46. There is a clear management structure. The director provides clear directions through shared values and strategic objectives. A senior manager responsible for all the learning centres supports the director and is in turn supported by other learning centre managers and a quality assurance manager. All staff fully understand their roles and responsibilities. Most staff have received an appraisal since the previous inspection, during which their performance and contribution to the provider's priorities and post-inspection action plans have been adequately discussed and agreed. Staff also attend a range of training and development courses.

47. The provision of literacy, numeracy and language support is satisfactory. Although RTL does not have a written literacy, numeracy and language strategy and action plan, learners' literacy, numeracy and language needs are systematically identified through the initial assessment process. Learners identified as having literacy, numeracy and language support needs are provided with effective support.

48. Achievement rates are inadequate. Although RTL has implemented policies, procedures and new working practices to rectify this weakness, but the pace of improvements has been slow.

Equality of opportunity

Contributory grade 2

49. The managing director is responsible for all aspects of the implementation and promotion of equality of opportunity. The equality of opportunity policy is systematically reviewed and shared with staff and learners. RTL also informs employers and work-placement providers about their responsibilities in relation to equality of opportunity. The equal opportunities procedures are detailed and cover bullying and harassment. Learners receive clear guidelines on how to complain. Learners also receive equal opportunities information during their induction through a booklet and discussions. This information has been extensively reviewed and updated and now informs the learners

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about their rights and responsibilities, including equal pay, rights when pregnant and direct and indirect discrimination.

50. RTL has a range of very effective initiatives to remove barriers to learning. These include providing highly dedicated staff to provide additional support, establishing learning centres in areas where participation is low and involvement in projects that increase the number of learners from under-represented groups. Staff fully understand learners' needs. Learners at risk are systematically identified and provided with very effective and appropriate support. Learners have access to RTL's staff throughout the week and at weekends. Learners are also provided with pastoral support as and when necessary. These interventions are followed up and recorded. RTL provides training at one of its learning centres for young learners excluded from schools or who have behavioural difficulties. The staff work effectively with external agencies to provide specialist support.

51. Staff receive very good development in equality of opportunity. Staff training is comprehensive and equips them with the knowledge they require to support learners. Following equality of opportunity training, staff assess themselves and those who do not feel sufficiently confident are offered further training. RTL displays a calendar with different cultural and religious events. During staff meetings this calendar is used as a basis to inform staff about the significance of the forthcoming cultural or religious events.

52. RTL monitors equal opportunities to ensure that work-placement providers and employers have an equal opportunities policy or are using its own policy and procedures. RTL takes effective actions if learners experience any equal opportunity issues and monitors appropriately the impact of this intervention. Equal opportunities are discussed effectively during progress reviews.

53. RTL is developing strategies to comply with the Race Relations (Amendment) act 2000 for staff recruitment. It currently monitors the ethnicity and disability of its staff. There is satisfactory collection and analysis of equal opportunities data on learner's gender, ethnicity and disability. These data are used to monitor the recruitment of learners and to aid its marketing activities. The provider is in the process of redesigning its marketing materials. Access arrangements for learners with restricted mobility are now adequate at the provider's premises and those of most of work-placement providers. In learning centres where access arrangements are not available, alternative training rooms are allocated.

Quality assurance

Contributory grade 3

54. Quality assurance was inadequate at the previous inspection. RTL has now developed a comprehensive quality assurance policy and detailed procedures to monitor the key aspect of the training process. There is now a clear implementation plan and an auditing plan to monitor how each trainer provides different aspects of the training process for the learner. Staff have been issued with the quality assurance manual and have received training on how to use it. Staff have also been able to provide

feedback on some aspects of the implementation plan. The new quality assurance arrangements have identified weaknesses in the training process and action plans have been implemented to rectify them.

55. Some aspects of the quality assurance system are not yet fully established and tested. For example, although the progress reviews have been audited and the trainers who have not followed the revised process have been given appropriate training, it is too early to judge the impact of this measure. The monitoring of key aspects of the training processes has not been fully implemented. Different trainers complete individual learning plans to different standards.

56. During the previous inspection, internal verification was judged to be inadequate. Policies and procedures for internal verification are now effective and have identified some poor assessment practices. There is a sampling plan to check different qualification units and trainers' assessment processes. Assessors receive feedback, although this is not always in sufficient detail. The assessment practices of trainers are not systematically monitored.

57. Provider staff fully understand the strategies for sharing good practice. These include identifying good practice through the observation of training processes and meetings focused on training standards. RTL interviews all its learners once a year. Learner feedback is analysed and actions are taken to tackle these weaknesses. However, RTL does not systematically monitor the impact of the actions.

58. The self-assessment process is thorough and effective. Through discussions and case studies staff are trained how to self-assess the provision. For the most recent self-assessment report, staff were allocated to different teams who discussed the strength and weaknesses of their appropriate areas of learning. The self-assessment report for each area was then incorporated in one report. However, learners and key stakeholders were not involved in the self-assessment process. Following self-assessment, the provider produced a development plan. Staff fully understand the strengths and weaknesses in their occupational areas and are fully involved in the actions to rectify the weaknesses. The final self-assessment report identified most of the strengths and weaknesses identified by inspectors.

AREAS OF LEARNING

Engineering, technology & manufacturing

Grade 3

Programmes inspected	Number of learners	Contributory grade
Work-based learning for young people	67	3

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

Strengths

- very effective links with employers
- good workplace resources
- good learner support
- very effective progress reviews

Weaknesses

- poor framework achievement
- poor retention rates
- late introduction of key skills for some learners

Achievement and standards

59. At the previous inspection, retention and achievement rates were poor. The framework achievement rate is still poor. Of those foundation modern apprentices who started in 1999, 3 per cent achieved the full framework. Of those who started in 2001-02, no learners have achieved. Retention rates are poor, but are improving. The current retention rate for is 61 per cent. This is an improvement on the last contract year that had a retention rate of 50 per cent.

60. Learners develop good work-related skills and employers and work-placement providers allow learners to carry out tasks with minimum supervision. Currently 56 per cent of learners receive additional learning support and are developing a wide range of skills to improve employability. For example, most learners have gained improved self-confidence through their learning programmes.

Quality of education and training

61. There are very effective links with employers. RTL is in regular contact with employers and work-placement providers. A member of the provider staff regularly visits employers and work-placement providers premises to check learners' progress and to provide guidance on the collection of workplace evidence. Other staff visit regularly to carry out progress reviews and to deal with pastoral and support issues.

62. Workplace resources are good. Some motor vehicle establishments are national and international companies and provide learners with good and extensive training in motor vehicle maintenance. In all cases, the standard of equipment and vehicles used by learners is above the requirements of the NVQ. Most garages use electronic diagnostic equipment and are able to give learners experience in fault diagnosis. Resources are also good in manufacturing. These companies use computerised machinery for cutting and forming processes. At an upholstery manufacturer, learners work with very skilled crafts people who help them develop their skills. Employers' staff are appropriately experienced and train learners in relevant vocational skills. Learners who require additional training are temporarily moved to another garage to gain additional skills.

63. There is good learner support. Assessors visit learners at least once a month and in some cases each week. Assessments are well planned and thorough. Evidence includes expert witness testimony, questions to determine learners' knowledge and direct observation. At one upholstery company, assessment is carried out by the company's own work-based assessor. One assessor uses a recording of his comments made throughout the assessment as additional evidence. Learners also receive timely and highly effective support to develop their portfolios of evidence. Progress reviews are carried out above contractual demand every four to eight weeks. However, in 2003 some reviews were not carried out and some learners' progress was not formally reviewed. Learners are also visited within the first few weeks of their work placement to ensure that they have settled in and to check if any help is required. Many staff have given learners their mobile phone number and can be contacted during the week and at weekends. Initial assessment is thorough, well recorded and clearly identifies the workbooks which are to be used to support the learner in advancing their non-vocational skills. The issuing of learning support material is sometimes slow. Induction is satisfactory, but some learners have a poor recall of its content.

64. Progress reviews are very effective. Learners' performance is analysed by all concerned and working relationships are discussed. Considerable time is spent on identifying training and how the workplace supervisor can monitor the learner's performance. The content of the review covers the NVQ requirements in detail with clear targets set and previous targets reviewed. Equal opportunities are also reinforced. Health and safety are discussed and commented on. An action plan is completed that clearly identifies the tasks which the learner should do before the next meeting. A visit report is completed that details the learner's progress in NVQ elements and units and in key skills elements completed. If required, a summary of additional support provided during the visit is recorded. This is forwarded to administration to enable progress to be monitored. All parties receive copies of the relevant paperwork.

65. Learners receive adequate literacy, numeracy and language support. Their literacy, numeracy and language needs are systematically assessed and learners who require additional support receive it at the early stages of their programme.

66. Subcontractor colleges and employers now keep RTL up to date on matters such as learners' timekeeping, attendance, coursework and progress. Employers have a good

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understanding of NVQs and modern apprenticeship frameworks and arrange suitable workplace experience. There is a qualified work-based assessor in one manufacturing employer. RTL has carried out informal training of expert witnesses with a number of employers to ensure that they understand the NVQ requirements and can help learners provide good portfolio evidence.

67. There has been late introduction of key skills for some learners. Some motor vehicle learners in their second and third year of training have only recently started their key skills. In manufacturing one learner on a foundation modern apprenticeship who started training in September 2003 took his key skills test in late February 2004. He has not yet started compiling key skills evidence. Previously, RTL used three local colleges for the training of its motor vehicle and engineering learners. Following the previous inspection, RTL transferred these learners to another local college, where learners are now receiving satisfactory key skills training.

Leadership and management

68. Since the previous inspection there have been many changes to the learning programmes. These include a rationalisation of college provision to improve standards, the introduction of a new comprehensive quality assurance system and new detailed review documentation. RTL has worked well to enhance the key strengths and rectify the weaknesses identified at the previous inspection. There have been significant improvements to the provision. Internal verification arrangements are satisfactory.

69. Equal opportunities is re-inforced during all visits and progress reviews and is satisfactory. Health and safety is also re-inforced and a qualified health and safety person from RLT makes additional visits where required. All aspects of the provision are monitored under the recently established quality assurance arrangements with all progress review documents subject to an audit. The current self-assessment report is accurate and well presented and links to the key questions in the 'Common Inspection Framework'.

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

Programmes inspected	Number of learners	Contributory grade
Work-based learning for young people	59	3

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

Strengths

- particularly thorough and effective initial assessment process
- very effective identification and support for at-risk learners
- good monitoring of training processes

Weaknesses

- poor achievement rates
- slow progress towards NVQ achievements
- ineffective target-setting

Achievement and standards

70. Learners' portfolios are well structured and many contain a wide range of workplace evidence. Work placements are well matched to learners' needs and provide supportive environments for them to develop good self-confidence and acquire a range of relevant skills. Retention rates are satisfactory and are improving.

71. Achievement rates are poor. Of the 32 learners who started learning programmes since the previous inspection, only 16 achieved their technical certificates, 10 completed two units of their NVQ and only six completed their full framework. Although learners are collecting valuable evidence across a range of units, progress towards achievement of NVQ units is slow. For example, some learners who have been on the programme for longer than six months have not yet achieved an NVQ unit. This was identified as a weakness in the self-assessment report and the issues contributing to the slow progress have been identified through the internal verification process. These include misinterpretation of framework guidelines and some poor assessment practice. Changes have been made to the assessment team and plans are in place to ensure that learners are guided more effectively towards unit completion. For those learners who are nearing the end of their programme, professional discussions have been organised to ensure that they have sufficient evidence for achievement of their NVQ.

Quality of education and training

72. The initial assessment process is particularly thorough and highly effective, a strength identified at the previous inspection and in the self-assessment report. Potential learners complete a initial literacy, numeracy and language and key skills diagnostic assessments before an interview. This ensures that learners are given informed advice on the appropriate type and level of programme. Additional learning needs are supported through the use of appropriate workbooks. A dedicated support tutor visits each learner in the workplace on regular basis to provide individual support. Progress is then measured through repeat diagnostic assessments. An additional assessment has been introduced recently to identify competence against technical certificate criteria. The results are used to plan individual attendance at off-the-job training sessions.

73. There are very effective arrangements for the identification and support of at-risk learners. Learners' progress is reviewed on a weekly basis and those learners identified to be at risk because of personal or learning difficulties are provided with immediate support. In addition to the dedicated learning support arrangements, learners are given pastoral advice and guidance by their assessors or are referred to external specialist organisations when appropriate. These effective support measures ensure that learners remain on their programme.

74. Literacy, numeracy and language support arrangements are satisfactory. When learners are identified as having literacy, numeracy or language support needs, trained staff provide effective support for the learners. Learners who can not be supported effectively during the normal training sessions are provided with additional time in workshop sessions.

75. Most learners attend RTL's learning centres every two weeks for off-the-job training in key skills and the technical certificates. Although these sessions are satisfactory, not enough attention is given to individual learning needs. The induction process is comprehensive and staff use a range of teaching methods, but it contains too much information to be covered effectively.

76. Resources are satisfactory. Staff are appropriately qualified and there is a good staff development programme in place. There are adequate resources to support learners' training and development needs. Work placements provide appropriate work for learners to cover the NVQ requirements. Assessment methods and practices are satisfactory to collect evidence electronically.

77. Progress reviews are satisfactory and involve employers. There is a detailed discussion on learners' progress, on personal matters and the on-the-job training. Sufficient time is spent with the learners reviewing their progress. During this meeting the workplace supervisor gains a good knowledge of the learner's progress and sets targets to be achieved for the next meeting. There is an effective three part-recording document for the outcomes of this process along with targets that are set for the next period. Following the previous inspection, the individual learning plans are now referred

to more systematically and are amended during the progress review.

78. Target-setting is ineffective. Short-term targets are not always measurable and are not linked to long-term targets in the individual learning plans. A new individual learning plan format has been recently introduced. This does include long-term achievement targets and it is too soon to judge its impact on learners' progress.

Leadership and management

79. There is good monitoring of learners' progress. Since the previous inspection there have been changes in the assessment team. The provider has implemented a new quality assurance system and this has been piloted in this occupational area. The quality assurance procedures cover all the main training processes. There is a detailed list of criteria against which performance is measured and these criteria are implemented well. RTL has monitored all the learning processes of all its learners and weaknesses in some of the training processes have been identified: in the review process, in the assessment process and in the individual learning plans. Actions plans have been put into place to rectify these weaknesses. Trainers who have not adequately carried out the training processes are monitored well and provided with appropriate support.

80. Internal verification is rigorous and has identified weaknesses in the assessment process. Feedback to assessors is also detailed and includes actions for improvement. Staff are fully committed to implementing improvements and improving standards.

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

Programmes inspected	Number of learners	Contributory grade
Work-based learning for young people	52	3

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

Strengths

- good retention rates
- very effective development of learners' skills through comprehensive on-the-job training
- good use of recorded professional discussions

Weaknesses

- poor achievement rates
- slow progress towards framework achievement
- ineffective progress reviews

Achievement and standards

81. Retention rates are good. Since the previous inspection, retention rates on retail programmes have risen from 77 per cent in 2002-03, to 88 per cent in 2003-04. The proportion of learners retained on customer service programmes has risen from 88 per cent in 2002-03 to 91 per cent in 2003-04. All learners now receive an early visit from a member of staff to ensure that any initial problems can be dealt with promptly and the learner retained on programme. Learners' progression into employment is satisfactory. Since the previous inspection, RTL has recruited more learners who are already employed.

82. Achievement rates are poor, a weakness not identified in the self-assessment report. No apprenticeship frameworks have been achieved in the last three years. However, since the initial inspection, 15 learners have achieved their NVQs, with one in customer service and the remainder in retailing. Although no frameworks have been completed, 15 learners have also achieved their key skills.

83. Progress towards framework achievement is slow. Many learners have been on programme for between five months and a year and have not achieved an NVQ unit. Some learners have been assessed by observation and some are close to completing one or two NVQ units. Most learners have not yet started to develop their key skills evidence, although some are due to take key skills external assessment tests. Others have been on programme for four months and have only recently undergone their key skills diagnostic assessment test. The portfolios of these learners do not contain enough evidence. Some internal verification sampling reports have identified examples of slow

progress or poor assessment. Delayed assessment of key skills was a weakness at the previous inspection and slow progress towards frameworks was identified as a weakness in the self-assessment report.

Quality of education and training

84. Learners develop their work skills through effective on-the-job training provided by their employers or work-placement providers. All learners are given additional induction training by their employers or work-placement providers. They are also thoroughly trained in all aspects of their job roles by managers and experienced colleagues. Some learners have access to structured company training programmes. They are trained in, and are expected to achieve, minimum levels of competence in their job roles in meeting the employer's expected standards of performance. Some evidence of this training is used in learners' portfolios as evidence of competence for their NVQ. Other learners have time devoted to their training and development, particularly in customer service skills, through training sessions with their managers. These sessions are well structured and in many cases the retail outlet is kept closed during trading hours so that this training can take place.

85. Good use is made of recorded professional discussion for assessing retailing learners. Some learners have been recorded giving answers to oral questions, as well as discussing relevant aspects of their job roles. The evidence is matched to qualification standards, and recordings are retained in learners' portfolios. Plans are in place for all the learners to use this method of recording of evidence.

86. Assessment practices are satisfactory. Learners' activity is observed during visits. Although the observation process is thorough, some evidence is not fully recorded by the assessors. Not all learners have been trained in referencing their own evidence onto the qualification reference sheets.

87. Resources are satisfactory. Staff have appropriate assessor and verifier qualifications. They also have suitable occupational experience in retailing and customer service. The main assessor and internal verifier recently carried out occupational updating. Learning resources consist mainly of subject-related assignments on topics such as health and safety, and industry legislation. All learners with additional literacy or numeracy needs also receive workbooks to help them with their literacy, numeracy and language development. A laptop computer and a CD-ROM from the retail sector skills council is used by some learners. Work-based employer resources are satisfactory and employers' health and safety systems are clearly communicated to learners.

88. Initial assessment is satisfactory. All learners receive an initial interview, and a literacy, numeracy and language assessment test which uses an appropriate software assessment tool. Twenty per cent of learners in the occupational area have been identified as having additional learning needs and receive additional visits in the workplace from a member of staff qualified in literacy, numeracy and language support. In addition, learners where technical certificates are included as part of their programme,

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have their job skills assessed by a structured questionnaire based on their current duties at work.

89. Learner support is satisfactory. Most learners receive practical support from assessors and their employer managers, including help in obtaining evidence for their portfolios and encouraging them to progress.

90. Progress reviews are ineffective. Although a comprehensive record of some aspects of the review is made on each review visit, not enough use is made of medium-term targets to focus learners' attention and effort on progress towards achievement. The review document is not appropriate for setting these targets. Some learners do not clearly remember their individual learning plan, as it is not routinely used by their assessor to review their progress. Although action plans are often used to record short-term targets for learners, some portfolios do not have enough action plans and do not always contain appropriate targets. Ineffective target-setting was identified as a weakness in the self-assessment report.

Leadership and management

91. Much work has been done on improving retention since the previous inspection, but these actions have not fully impacted on achievements rates. Learners have a clear understanding of equal opportunities. Internal verification is satisfactory. Although verification activity has only recently restarted, sampling of portfolios has been carried out and appropriate records are maintained. The new internal verifier has planned dates for the observation of assessors. The company's self-assessment report accurately identified some of the key issues found at reinspection.