

REINSPECTION REPORT

LAGAT Training and Development Reinspection

03 June 2004



ADULT LEARNING
INSPECTORATE

LAGAT TRAINING AND DEVELOPMENT 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

LAGAT Training and Development Reinspection

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REINSPECTION REPORT

DESCRIPTION OF THE PROVIDER

1. LAGAT Training and Development (LAGAT) was formed in 1987 as a consortium of Lincoln Co-operative Society, Simons of Lincoln and Lincoln Chamber of Commerce. Its head office is in Lincoln with a training centre nearby. It provides work-based learning for young people in business administration, information and communications technology, retailing and customer service and hospitality and travel. Most training is carried out in the workplace, although all learners also receive some off-the-job training. Much of this is carried out in the Lincoln training centre but some learners receive this on an individual basis in their place of work. Business administration learners attend the local college of further education for their off-the-job training. Learners also have the opportunity to take additional courses such as health and safety. LAGAT has several learndirect centres throughout Lincolnshire and offers private training for local companies. There are also two recruitment agencies. There are 30 members of staff, eight of whom form the training department which is responsible for the programmes funded by the Lincolnshire and Rutland Learning and Skills Council (LSC). There is a managing director who reports directly to the board of directors, one of whom has specific responsibility for overseeing the work of LAGAT. The training and quality manager reports to the managing director.

2. LAGAT is currently training 83 young people, most of whom are employed. There are 59 foundation modern apprentices 21 advanced modern apprentices and three learners on other work-based learning programmes.

3. The 2001 census shows that the proportion of the local population from minority ethnic groups is 2.2 per cent, compared with the national average of 9.1 per cent.

SCOPE OF PROVISION

Business administration, management & professional

4. There are 34 learners on work-based learning programmes in business administration, management and professional. Of these, four are advanced modern apprentices, 29 are foundation modern apprentices and one is working towards a national vocational qualification (NVQ) at level 2. Learners are either referred to LAGAT by Connexions or directly from employers. Most learners are employed by local organisations although some are on a work placement. They attend a half-day induction before they start their programme. Learners can also follow a four-week work taster course to help them determine their preferred area of learning. The learners' key skills and evidence towards their administration NVQs are assessed in the workplace. LAGAT's staff visit the learners every four weeks to carry out assessment, monitor progress and cover any pastoral concerns. Learners who have numeracy, literacy or information technology (IT) needs attend sessions at one of the training centres. They also attend one of the LAGAT training centres or the local college for their technical certificate training.

Retailing, customer service & transportation

5. LAGAT offers work-based learning programmes in retailing, customer service and warehousing and distribution. At the time of inspection, there are 19 learners, of whom 10 are working towards qualifications in retailing, five in customer service and four in warehousing and distribution. There are four advanced modern apprentices, 13 foundation modern apprentices and two learners on the NVQ programme. Most assessment takes place in the workplace, with some portfolio-building sessions in LAGAT's training centres at Lincoln or Gainsborough. Off-the-job training sessions take place in the training centres. Key skills and literacy, numeracy and language support training sessions are held each week, as well as planned sessions towards tests for technical certificates.

Hospitality, sport, leisure & travel

6. There are 27 learners on hospitality, sports, leisure and travel programmes. Of these, 21 are on the travel programme and six are working towards hospitality qualifications. There are 12 advanced modern apprentices and 15 foundation modern apprentices. Learners come from a wide area of Lincolnshire with the furthest being 45 miles from the training centres. For most learners off-the-job training sessions take place in the Lincoln and Gainsborough centres. For the learners who are based in more remote areas, this takes place in the workplace by one of LAGAT's assessors. Most assessment takes place in the workplace, with some portfolio-building sessions in the training centres. Key skills and literacy, numeracy and language skills training is held each week as well as planned sessions towards tests for technical certificates.

ABOUT THE REINSPECTION

Number of inspectors	4
Number of inspection days	12
Number of learner interviews	21
Number of staff interviews	33
Number of employer interviews	6
Number of subcontractor interviews	1
Number of locations/sites/learning centres visited	17
Number of partner/external agency interviews	2

OVERALL JUDGEMENT

7. LAGAT was previously inspected in February 2003 and all areas of learning were judged to be unsatisfactory apart from foundation which was satisfactory. Leadership and management, equality of opportunity and quality assurance were also unsatisfactory. At the end of the reinspection process, business administration, management and professional was judged to be good, as was retailing, customer service and transportation. Hospitality, sport, leisure and travel was judged to be satisfactory. Leadership and management are good, as is quality assurance. The arrangements for equality of opportunity are satisfactory.

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	4
Quality assurance	4

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

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

Hospitality, sport, leisure & travel	4
Contributory grades:	
Work-based learning for young people	4

Foundation programmes	3
Contributory grades:	
Work-based learning for young people	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	3
Quality assurance	2

Business administration, management & professional	2
Contributory grades:	
Work-based learning for young people	2

Retailing, customer service & transportation	2
Contributory grades:	
Work-based learning for young people	2

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Hospitality, sport, leisure & travel	3
Contributory grades:	
Work-based learning for young people	3

KEY FINDINGS

Achievement and standards

8. **Retention rates have improved significantly since the previous inspection and are good in most areas of learning.** In business administration the retention rate has increased from 53 per cent in 2001-02 to 76 per cent in 2002-03. In retailing and customer service the retention rates have improved from 17 per cent to 50 per cent for the same years. Travel programmes have a good retention rate of 77.8 per cent for 2002-03. However, retention rates for hospitality learners are low at 28 per cent.

9. **Achievement rates have also improved since the previous inspection,** although the improvement is not the same in all areas of learning. Twenty-nine per cent of business administration learners completed a modern apprenticeship framework in 2001-02 and this increased to 43 per cent in 2002-03. In retailing and customer service 35 per cent of foundation modern apprentices completed the framework in 2001-02, compared with 42.9 per cent in 2002-03. A further 28 per cent are still in learning. However, in customer service and retailing programmes, some learners make slow progress. In hospitality, achievement rates are low at 26.9 per cent for 2001-02, the last year for which data is available.

10. All learners produce work of at least a satisfactory standard.

Quality of education and training

11. Resources at LAGAT are satisfactory for all learners. At the training centres learners have access to up-to-date computer equipment and an appropriate range of learning materials. Staff are qualified and experienced and have many opportunities to develop their skills and knowledge.

12. **Assessment practice is good in all areas of learning.** Assessors use a wide range of assessment methods with frequent observations in the workplace. Short-term target-setting is very good and action plans are detailed and effective. Learners' progress is effectively monitored against the action plan. However, in retailing, customer service, travel and hospitality, long-term targets are insufficiently challenging.

13. **Learners are well supported by LAGAT.** There is a comprehensive and effective induction programme which has been introduced since the previous inspection. The content is reinforced during progress reviews and learners remember the content well.

Learners have very good working relationships with their assessors and feel able to speak to their assessor about personal issues. Assessor visits are more frequent for learners who need more support. Many learners also benefit from very good support from their employers. They ensure that learners have a good range of opportunities to gather evidence for their portfolios and key skills. Employers value the support given by LAGAT.

14. **Literacy and numeracy support is good.** All assessors and trainers have received training to raise their awareness of literacy and numeracy, and key skills testing. All learners take an effective screening test to identify numeracy and literacy needs.

Leadership and management

15. **Leadership and management have improved significantly since the previous inspection.** Strategic and business planning take account of local and regional issues. However, some of the corporate objectives are not sufficiently specific. They are descriptive and do not form an effective basis for directors to monitor the company's performance.

16. **The company has a wide range of productive links with employers and other organisations.** LAGAT uses these links to provide training opportunities for young people in a wide range of companies across the county.

17. **Communications within LAGAT are good.** There is a range of well-recorded meetings which cover equality and diversity, and retention and achievement. LAGAT has an effective management information system which produces a range of reports.

18. **Quality assurance processes have improved significantly since the previous inspection.** There is now a clear procedures manual which covers all key aspects of LAGAT's work. There are appropriate forums where quality assurance is discussed and actions are identified and monitored.

19. Internal verification was identified as a weakness at the previous inspection but it is now satisfactory. There is a clear internal verification strategy which is effective, and it is implemented consistently in all areas of learning. There is clear guidance on internal verification for staff and regular standardisation meetings.

20. Equality of opportunity is satisfactory. LAGAT has a number of initiatives which are aimed at widening participation, especially from hard-to-reach groups. They are working with other organisations to involve single parents and disaffected young people.

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

Leadership and management

Strengths

- extensive range of effective partnerships

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- good communications
- good support for literacy and numeracy
- good system to aid continuous improvement
- good initiatives to widen participation

Weaknesses

- insufficiently specific corporate objectives

Business administration, management & professional

Strengths

- effective strategies to improve retention rates
- good assessment practice
- good pastoral and vocational support
- good support for literacy and numeracy

Weaknesses

- low but improving achievement rates

Retailing, customer service & transportation

Strengths

- significant improvement in retention rates
- good assessment practice
- good pastoral, vocational and literacy and numeracy support for learners

Weaknesses

- low but improving achievement rates

Hospitality, sport, leisure & travel

Strengths

- good retention rates on travel programmes
- good assessment practice
- good support for learners

Weaknesses

- some slow progress towards completion of foundation modern apprenticeship framework
- poor retention and achievement rates on hospitality programmes

DETAILED REINSPECTION FINDINGS

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

Grade 2

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

Strengths

- extensive range of effective partnerships
- good communications
- good support for literacy and numeracy
- good system to aid continuous improvement
- good initiatives to widen participation

Weaknesses

- insufficiently specific corporate objectives

21. There are very good links with employers and other organisations to benefit learners and the wider community. LAGAT's chairman is chief executive of the local chamber of commerce, and the managing director a council member. Another director is chairman of the local Connexions management board. A further two directors are governors of a major local college. These links are used effectively to increase awareness of local and regional needs and in the planning of strategies to meet them. The business development section effectively promotes modern apprenticeships to employers and young people. Communication with employers is very good and is helped by an employer handbook and LSC publications which provide employers with reference information on modern apprenticeships. Employers fully understand the programmes that learners are taking. Operating in close association with a subsidiary company, a recruitment agency and an education business partnership, the business development team have access to a diverse range of appropriate employers in the county. LAGAT is currently providing services to over 50 companies. The team also works with local schools and Connexions to provide opportunities to school leavers and young unemployed people.

22. Communications are good and ensure that information about learners is passed on to those who need it. Staff attend a number of fortnightly or monthly meetings which are dedicated to particular aspects of the training. For example there are meetings concentrating on marketing, retention and achievement overall and by area of learning, internal verification and assessment. A monthly team meeting is attended by all staff. All meetings follow a similar format of a fixed agenda, review of previous minutes and actions, current topics, actions required, when and by whom. Minutes are circulated to all attendees and absent colleagues. These meetings ensure that concerns are discussed and actions are agreed and monitored. They also allow the sharing of good practice

across the organisation. There is an effective management information system which is used by management and staff to monitor, manage and improve operations and to monitor learners' progress. LAGAT uses this system to ensure that each learner progresses at an appropriate rate. Regular reports are produced on retention and achievement rates, equality and attendance and these figures are used to develop strategies to resolve problems. A detailed internal verification and progress system includes comprehensive milestones, against which achievement is very effectively assessed. Assessors and internal verifiers use this data to plan their workloads and to identify learners who might need additional support. The **training and quality manager** receives reports which are used to monitor all aspects of all areas of learning and to **identify** common areas which the company needs to deal with.

23. The support for learners with additional needs in numeracy and literacy is good. All trainers and assessors have been trained to raise their awareness of literacy and numeracy and key skills training and testing. At the time of recruitment all learners who are not exempt from the key skills take a literacy and numeracy test. Those who need additional support are referred to in-house provision or back to Connexions, depending on the level of support needed. Numeracy and literacy training is provided at weekly training sessions in the Lincoln and Gainsborough centres. Key skills training is introduced at an early stage in the training and is an integral part of the NVQ assessment. Evidence of attainment is gathered from work activities and a specially devised work-based project. Key skills progress is incorporated with other training on the internal verification and progress system.

24. Staff training and development is well planned and recorded. The three-year development plan identifies the skills staff need to meet the objectives of the plan. An annual learning plan, which is regularly reviewed and updated by the **training and quality manager**, is prepared for each staff member. Individual needs and achievement are recorded in a personal development file for each staff member. One day each month is set aside for awareness or specific skills training sessions.

25. The strategic business plan does not include corporate objectives, and the monitoring of the company's performance against these objectives is not clear. The business plan includes a set of comprehensive objectives relating to performance, quality and development. Targets are established for all aspects of service delivery and individual staff members. The targets are closely monitored through the management information and internal verification systems.

26. There is a comprehensive business plan that takes account of local and regional issues. The plan includes a commitment to quality through continuous improvement of its operations and its personnel. Key company policies covering equal opportunities, staff recruitment, training and development, health and safety and quality are integral components of the plan and are mostly focused on the learners. Key members of staff and management meet to discuss forward planning and submit detailed proposals for consideration by the board. There is good, responsible financial management with a comprehensive budget and regular detailed monthly reports. The board meets quarterly to review progress and financial performance.

Equality of opportunity

Contributory grade 3

27. LAGAT works effectively to widen participation. It is involved in one-off projects and longer-term partnerships which benefit learners and the wider community. One project is a pilot which LAGAT runs jointly with the local college of further education. It is aimed at young people whose levels of numeracy and literacy are not at a high enough level to enable them to start a programme of learning or gain employment. The aim is to raise their skill levels to an appropriate level and to give a period of work experience. The programme has been running for one year and out of 22 learners who have started on the programme all have gained a basic health and safety qualification, and key skills at level 1 for application of number. Four have secured employment and eight have started foundation modern apprenticeships. The company has also targeted young people who are associated with many of the Indian restaurants in Lincoln. While few learners have joined work-based learning programmes, many have enrolled on LAGAT's learndirect provision. LAGAT is also involved in a number of other more-recently introduced projects intended to widen participation, although they are too recent to determine their effectiveness. They are working with Connexions to engage disaffected young people. Learners are coached in a sport of their choice and trained in a range of different subjects including literacy and numeracy and key skills. LAGAT has also been working with young single parents in a deprived area of Lincoln to involve them in education and training. A crèche is provided. A new programme is designed to target disaffected young people and get them involved in education and training. Over a two-week period learners will spend eight days working in a hotel restaurant and will receive a wage. They will receive all relevant information about joining a foundation modern apprenticeship programme.

28. The company has an appropriate equal opportunities strategy and a range of associated policies which are generally understood by staff. The quality assurance manager has overall responsibility for equal opportunities and ensures that policies and procedures are fully implemented across the company. There are regular monthly team meetings and equality and diversity is a standing agenda items at these meetings. The company collects a range of data about its learners such as ethnicity, their last school and if they have a disability. The data is discussed at the monthly team meetings but at present it is not fully used to target under-represented groups.

29. LAGAT has a full and detailed plan to train all members of staff in equal opportunities. This plan is currently being implemented, but has not yet had sufficient time to have a significant impact. All staff have an appropriate understanding of equal opportunities and how it affects learners.

30. LAGAT does not keep copies of the equal opportunities policies of many of its employers. Until recently LAGAT has only recently asked employers to supply a copy of their policy. Employers who do not have an equal opportunities policy must agree to implement the LAGAT policy. Alternatively LAGAT will work with them to develop their own. Employers who have worked with LAGAT for a long time are currently being asked to provide a copy of their policy.

31. The promotion of equal opportunities is satisfactory. Learners are treated appropriately by staff and they have a satisfactory understanding of equal opportunities. They are given a limited amount of training during their induction, but a more substantial training session is taught later in the programme. The training is effective and highlights equal opportunities issues and concepts. At every progress review learners are asked questions to reinforce their knowledge. They are also asked if they are being treated fairly by their employer. However, there is little visible promotion of equality of opportunity at LAGAT's training centres. There are no displays in either the training rooms or the corridors to promote equality of opportunity.

32. The procedures for complaints, grievance, harassment and appeals are satisfactory. While learners do not always know the details of these processes, they are all aware of where to find out about them.

Quality assurance

Contributory grade 2

33. There are good systems to ensure continuous improvement of the provision. There is a well-written and well-presented quality assurance manual which covers all aspects of the provision and focuses on achievement. The processes, procedures, standards and documents are quality assured by an effective annual audit and review cycle which details the schedule for teaching observations, learner and employer evaluations, equality, and health and safety assessments, and procedure reviews. These procedures are fully implemented and are effective in improving the retention and achievement rates in all areas of learning.

34. Learner and employer evaluations are sent out three times a year, and there is a good response at 81 per cent of learners and 55 per cent of employers. Additional information is obtained from employers by telephone interviews with the centre co-ordinator. Results are analysed and discussed at a staff meeting. Actions are planned and scheduled to improve the relevance and quality of the provision. The progress and effectiveness of these actions is monitored at subsequent staff meetings.

35. Internal verification is effective across all areas of learning. Regular internal verifier and assessor meetings ensure the process is consistent and good practice is shared. Internal verification is very well planned and closely monitored to ensure it is thorough and fair. An internal verification sampling process ensures learners' portfolios and assessments are verified at fixed intervals throughout the learning programme. All staff are qualified and attend regular training to update their skills. An internal verification and progress planning and monitoring system has been introduced. It includes internal verification and assessment schedules and is an effective way of monitoring the learners' progress on a monthly basis.

36. The initial assessment process is the responsibility of the business development team. The process clearly identifies the needs of learners by using diagnostic tests, and also takes account of previous learning and experience. A four-week taster programme has been introduced since the previous inspection and this enables the learner to gain

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experience in a vocational area before making a commitment to the modern apprenticeship framework. There has been a significant improvement in the early leaver rate and retention overall in the past year.

37. After being trained in the self-assessment process, all staff contributed to the latest self-assessment report. The views of learners and employers were sought and used in the process. The report includes all areas of learning and identifies strengths and weaknesses.

AREAS OF LEARNING

Business administration, management & professional

Grade 2

Programmes inspected	Number of learners	Contributory grade
Work-based learning for young people	34	2

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

Strengths

- effective strategies to improve retention rates
- good assessment practice
- good pastoral and vocational support
- good support for literacy and numeracy

Weaknesses

- low but improving achievement rates

Achievement and standards

38. Since the previous inspection, LAGAT has implemented a number of strategies to improve retention and achievement rates, and learners are now making better progress towards their NVQ, technical certificate and key skills qualifications. Completion of modern apprenticeship frameworks, for example, has increased from 29 per cent in 2001-02 to 43 per cent in 2002-03. Learners who are currently in learning are also on schedule to complete their modern apprenticeship framework by the target date. LAGAT's staff closely monitor their learners through their NVQ, technical certificate and key skills units and are able to identify their progression towards the qualification targets. Over the same period the proportion of learners remaining on programme has also improved from 53 per cent to 76 per cent. However, while the achievement rates in this area of learning have shown a significant improvement, at 43 per cent they are still low.

39. Portfolios are adequately maintained and contain a good range of evidence. This includes observation reports from assessors, evidence from the learners' work activities, taped discussions, detailed personal statements and written confirmation of tasks completed from their employers. Learners receive good support and advice from their assessors on portfolio-building and are provided with a sample portfolio to work from. LAGAT's assessors also work with employers to ensure that workplace assessment is adequately planned. Workplace supervisors provide good on-the-job training and are happy to give detailed testimonies to support the work carried out.

40. Key skills delivery and assessment are satisfactory. Key skills are now introduced at

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the learners' induction and they are encouraged to make key skills an integral part of the vocational training. One part of the assessment of key skills involves the completion of a work-based project which employers and LAGAT's staff have designed. Learners also make use of work products in their key skills portfolios. Learners are making better progress towards the key skills than at the previous inspection.

Quality of education and training

41. Learners are well supported throughout their programme. Since the previous inspection, the induction programme has been amended to include more concise information on the content of the modern apprenticeship framework. This is then reinforced during the learners' first progress review. All learners are now fully aware of their qualification targets and the key elements of their training programme. Assessors provide very effective, ongoing support for learners. The frequency of review and assessment visits ensures that regular contact is maintained and is an excellent opportunity for personal or work-related problems to be dealt with. Learners are given the mobile telephone number of their assessor and can contact them at any time to arrange assessments or reviews or to discuss personal problems. Well-planned and well-structured sessions are available for learners who need support with numeracy, literacy or IT. Weekly support sessions are held at the training centres in Lincoln and Gainsborough. Employers also provide good support for learners in the workplace. They help learners complete work-based projects and gather evidence for their key skills and NVQ. Learners gain significant benefit from their training and the range of support that is available.

42. Since the previous inspection, more effective assessment practices have been introduced. Assessors carry out frequent observations of workplace performance which are closely linked with previously agreed action plans. Evidence from daily work activities is also assessed and very detailed and constructive written feedback is given to the learners. In some cases, evidence is gathered through taped discussion between the assessors and their learners. A new individual learning plan has also been introduced which includes short- and long-term achievement targets. These take the form of learning milestones which the assessors use to closely monitor learners' progress. Learners are very aware of their individual milestones which motivate them to progress more quickly through their qualification. LAGAT's staff visit the learners every four weeks to monitor their progress and assess their performance in the workplace. Progress towards each element of the framework is discussed with the learner during the review.

43. The assessors are keen to help and support their learners throughout their learning programme. Employers are also involved in the progress reviews and they are given a copy of the review paperwork. LAGAT's staff also discuss assessment opportunities with employers to ensure that learners are able to demonstrate their competence in key tasks.

44. LAGAT arranges off-the-job training sessions for learners who are taking a technical certificate. For foundation modern apprentices, monthly sessions are held at the training

centres in Lincoln and Gainsborough. Advanced modern apprentices attend the local college every week. Learners find these sessions effective and they make satisfactory progress towards their qualification goals. The sessions include background knowledge which is relevant to their job roles. LAGAT's training accommodation is satisfactory and is equipped with up-to-date computers, modern office furniture and relevant textbooks. LAGAT's staff are appropriately qualified and have regular opportunities to update their skills and qualifications.

45. Internal verification is effective. A sampling plan has been produced and records confirm that regular monitoring of assessor decisions has been carried out. Verification activity includes the sampling of portfolios, the observation of assessment and regular assessment standardisation meetings. Assessors receive detailed feedback from internal verifiers.

46. Support for learners who have numeracy and literacy needs is good. There are weekly sessions which are provided by a well-qualified member of staff, and these are well attended by learners. Good use is made of the results of the initial assessment tests to identify learners' literacy and numeracy support needs. When needs are identified they are included in the individual learning plan. Progress towards literacy and numeracy goals is recorded in the plan.

Leadership and management

47. Staff have a clear understanding of the company goals which are focused on the learners.

48. A number of strategies have been introduced by LAGAT to improve retention and achievement rates. The strategies are effective and have increased the achievement rates from 29 per cent to 43 per cent in just over a year. Much progress has been made to ensure that learners enjoy their learning experience and have every chance of achieving their qualification goals. Regular, focused target-setting takes place and there have been significant improvements in assessment practices. LAGAT has introduced short taster courses, increased the levels of support and offer more frequent progress reviews. The proportion of learners remaining on their programmes has increased since the previous inspection.

49. Staff are clear about their roles and responsibilities and receive good support from their managers. Regular team meetings are held and there is effective communication between all staff. Staff are actively encouraged to take additional qualifications to improve their skills and develop their areas of expertise.

50. All staff in this area of learning were involved in the self-assessment process and recognise it as way of improving the quality of programmes. The self-assessment report is accepted by all staff as a true reflection of the programmes currently offered. It is self-critical and has led to improvements.

Retailing, customer service & transportation**Grade 2**

Programmes inspected	Number of learners	Contributory grade
Work-based learning for young people	19	2

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

Strengths

- significant improvement in retention rates
- good assessment practice
- good pastoral, vocational and literacy and numeracy support for learners

Weaknesses

- low but improving achievement rates

Achievement and standards

51. There has been a significant improvement in the retention rates. For advanced modern apprentices, retention rates in 2000-01 and 2001-02 were 16.7 per cent, rising to 50 per cent in 2002-03. None of the learners in the current intake have left early. For foundation modern apprentices, 47.4 per cent of learners were retained in 2000-01, 44.1 per cent in 2001-02 and 71.4 per cent in 2002-03. For the current intake 78.6 per cent of the learners have remained on the programme or have achieved the qualification.

52. Achievement rates are low, but are showing a significant improvement. In 2003-04, 50 per cent of the advanced modern apprentices have so far completed the framework and 50 per cent are still in learning. This compares with 16.7 per cent for 2000-01 and 5.6 per cent for 2001-02. In 2002-03, 16.7 per cent have completed the framework, with a potential maximum of 50 per cent if all those still in learning complete the framework. For foundation modern apprentices, during the same periods, achievement rates were 31.6 per cent in 2000-01 and 35.3 per cent in 2001-02. In 2002-03, 42.9 per cent have already completed the framework, and 28.6 per cent are still in learning. Learners in the 2003-04 intake are making good progress.

53. Portfolios are well organised and include a good range of evidence. Learners appreciate the advice given by assessors on how to organise their portfolios to support achievement of their action plan. Employers provide written statements to confirm learners' competence in key tasks.

Quality of education and training

54. Assessment practice in the retailing and customer service programmes is good. A wide range of relevant assessment methods are used by assessors including observations. Learners are helped to organise their portfolios which are well presented. The evidence is cross referenced to as many units as possible. Short-term planning is excellent with detailed action plans which clearly identify all evidence that needs to be gathered. Assessors discuss these with employers and learners. However, longer-term planning is insufficiently challenging.

55. Assessors give learners good support. They form good working relationships with learners and offer firm guidance. When learners do not meet targets on their action plan, a new plan is agreed and the assessor discusses how they will achieve the new targets. Learners increase their confidence and self-assurance in the workplace and are motivated by the assessors' attitudes. There are frequent visits by assessors who discuss assessments, action-planning and any personal problems. Learners often contact their assessor between visits if they have a query. Employers are informed about their learners' progress and value the support that they receive. LAGAT uses questionnaires to gather the learners' views. Visits are planned with the employer and are organised to meet the employers' needs. Employers have the opportunity to comment on the programme through the use of questionnaires.

56. The resources in the centre are appropriate for off-the-job training. All staff are suitably qualified for their roles as assessor or internal verifier and some have training awards. There are good opportunities for staff training and development. Recent training initiatives include sessions on key skills and equal opportunities.

57. Employers are informed about reviews and are invited to attend, although work pressures can sometimes prevent them from doing so. They are brought up to date with their employees' progress and what forward planning has been carried out. They are fully involved in agreeing the tasks which need to be completed for the NVQ and sometimes agree to additional tasks to enable learners to demonstrate competence.

58. Support for literacy and numeracy is good. Learners have weekly training sessions either individually or in a group. They gain confidence as they master concepts that they found difficult at school. The process enables learners to progress onto modern apprenticeship programmes.

Leadership and management

59. There are effective strategies to improve the retention rates. Learners who are at risk of leaving early benefit from four-weekly reviews. The internal verification is monitored and slow achievement against targets is identified. Ensuring that learners are on the right programme is given a high priority by staff at LAGAT. Learners have an initial assessment, which includes a test for those who have not reached the appropriate grades in mathematics and English. The company has a clear and effective approach to key

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skills. Learners are accepted onto a programme with one level below that required for the key skills. Those who are not yet at this standard are referred back to Connexions for additional help.

60. Internal verification is used effectively to ensure consistency and appropriateness. There is a 25 per cent check of all portfolios and learners are interviewed as part of the process. Consistency is ensured by observation of assessments and through regular meetings.

61. The self-assessment process has been used effectively by staff to identify areas for improvement. The self-assessment report is appropriately evaluative and identifies most of the strengths identified by inspectors. While it recognised all of the weaknesses identified at inspection, it identified additional weaknesses which were not appropriate.

Hospitality, sport, leisure & travel**Grade 3**

Programmes inspected	Number of learners	Contributory grade
Work-based learning for young people	27	3

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

Strengths

- good retention rates on travel programmes
- good assessment practice
- good support for learners

Weaknesses

- some slow progress towards completion of foundation modern apprenticeship framework
- poor retention and achievement rates on hospitality programmes

Achievement and standards

62. Retention rate for the travel programme are good. In the first intake of learners in 2002-03, 77.8 per cent of the advanced modern apprentices and 100 per cent of the foundation modern apprentices were retained. For learners who joined the programme in 2003-04, all have been retained to date.

63. Slow progress is made towards completion of the foundation modern apprenticeship in travel by some learners. The four learners who enrolled in 2002 are still in learning but none of them have completed the framework. Some of the learners are ahead of their target date for some of the units, but others are behind their target dates. These learners are receiving additional help from assessors. Employers are encouraged to help their learners by providing opportunities at work for assessment.

64. Retention and achievement rates on hospitality programmes are poor. Between 2000 and 2004, retention rates have averaged 28 per cent, and achievement rates were 23.8 per cent in 2000-01, 26.9 per cent in 2001-02 and none of the last two intakes have completed the framework. Seventeen per cent of learners are still in learning from the 2002-03 intake and 20 per cent from the 2003-04 intake.

65. Retention and achievement in the area of learning overall is satisfactory. For the advanced modern apprentices, retention rates for 2000-01 and 2001-02 were 20 per cent, rising to 66.7 per cent and 40 per cent in the subsequent two years. For the foundation modern apprentices, 27.3 per cent of learners were retained in 2000-01, rising to 50 per cent in 2001-02, 33.3 per cent in 2002-03 and 90 per cent in the current year. Achievement rates for the same periods range from none for the advanced

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modern apprentices in 2000-01 to a potential maximum of 20 per cent for 2001-02, 60 per cent for 2002-03 and 40 per cent for 2003-04 if all learners complete the framework. For the foundation modern apprentices, during the same periods, achievement rates range from 27.3 per cent for 2000-01, 33.3 per cent for 2001-02, and a potential maximum of 28.6 per cent for 2002-03 and 90 per cent for 2003-04 if all remaining learners complete the framework. While there is no consistent improvement year on year, there is an improving trend.

66. The learners' portfolios are satisfactory in terms of organisation and quality of evidence.

Quality of education and training

67. Assessment practice is good. Assessors use a wide range of relevant assessment methods, with observation taking place whenever possible. Cross-referencing of evidence is particularly good. The short-term action-planning is excellent and action plans are detailed and are discussed and agreed with learners and their employers. They identify the evidence is needed to achieve the NVQ elements and units. However, long-term action-planning does not keep learners' on target for completion within the allocated timescale. The assessors are experienced, knowledgeable and are aware of each learners' progress.

68. There is good support for learners from their assessors and trainers. Assessors have formed good working relationships with their learners who increase their confidence and self-assurance in the workplace. Learners are motivated by joint decision-making after detailed discussion. Assessors' visits are frequent and include assessment, discussion and action-planning. Contact between visits is encouraged. Learners can choose their optional units and have the opportunity to evaluate their programmes and make recommendations for improvements. One learner who lives a considerable distance from the training centres, has a full day scheduled for assessment, action-planning, discussion and individual coaching. Employers are kept informed about their learners' progress and comment on their improvements in terms of confidence and the ability to deal with difficult situations. Visits by assessors are planned with the employer and take into account the employer's and learner's needs. Learners also benefit from off-the-job training for portfolio-building and work towards technical certificates. Resources are satisfactory.

69. The review process is satisfactory. Employers are involved in the review, agree the action plan and make comments on their learners' progress. Employers are informed about their learners' progress and the forward planning that has been carried out. Checks are made on the feasibility of evidence collection and agreement is requested for commitment to future activities.

70. Support for learners who have additional numeracy and literacy needs is good. There are weekly learning sessions which take place individually or in groups. Their confidence increases as they master skills that they did not find possible at school. The

teacher is well qualified. The sessions are effective and ensure that learners progress at a good rate.

71. Employers speak highly of the support their learners receive from assessors and the staff at LAGAT's head office. In one instance, the employer identified that the help given by an assessor was the main reason that their learner achieved their qualification.

Leadership and management

72. The management of hospitality, sports, leisure and travel is good. All staff have a clear understanding of the short- and long-term objectives of the area and of the company as a whole.

73. Strategies to maintain the good retention rates are in place. Four-weekly reviews are carried out for learners who are at risk of leaving early. Internal verification is monitored and slow achievement against targets is identified. Learners have an initial assessment, which includes a test for those who have not reached the appropriate grades in mathematics and English. Learners who do not reach the necessary standard are referred back to Connexions for additional help. LAGAT is currently running a pilot project in collaboration with a local college of further education to help these young people.

74. There is a good range of opportunities for staff development. There have been sessions on equality of opportunity and the delivery of key skills. All assessors and internal verifiers have the appropriate qualifications and experience and some have training qualifications. Physical resources at the training centres are appropriate.

75. The internal verification is effective. Assessors are observed and they are given written feedback on their performance. The process includes interviews with learners and a 25 per cent check on all portfolios.

76. The self-assessment process is effective in that it broadly identifies the weaknesses identified during the inspection. The report was self-critical and has been used to improve the quality of provision.