

INSPECTION REPORT

Rochdale Training Association

16 January 2004



ADULT LEARNING
INSPECTORATE

Grading

Inspectors use a seven-point scale to summarise their judgements about the quality of learning sessions. The descriptors for the seven grades are:

- *grade 1 - excellent*
- *grade 2 - very good*
- *grade 3 - good*
- *grade 4 - satisfactory*
- *grade 5 - unsatisfactory*
- *grade 6 - poor*
- *grade 7 - very poor.*

Inspectors use a five-point scale to summarise their judgements about the quality of provision in occupational/curriculum areas and Jobcentre Plus programmes. The same scale is used to describe the quality of leadership and management, which includes quality assurance and equality of opportunity. The descriptors for the five grades are:

- *grade 1 - outstanding*
- *grade 2 - good*
- *grade 3 - satisfactory*
- *grade 4 - unsatisfactory*
- *grade 5 - very weak.*

The two grading scales relate to each other as follows:

SEVEN-POINT SCALE	FIVE-POINT SCALE
grade 1	grade 1
grade 2	
grade 3	grade 2
grade 4	grade 3
grade 5	grade 4
grade 6	grade 5
grade 7	

Adult Learning Inspectorate

The Adult Learning Inspectorate (ALI) was established under the provisions of the *Learning and Skills Act 2000* to bring the inspection of all aspects of adult learning and work-based 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
- **learnirect** provision
- Adult and Community Learning
- training funded by Jobcentre Plus
- education and training in prisons, at the invitation of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Prisons.

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

Overall judgement

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

Provision will normally be deemed to be inadequate where:

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

This provision will be subject to a full reinspection.

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

INSPECTION REPORT

Rochdale Training Association

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INSPECTION REPORT

DESCRIPTION OF THE PROVIDER

1. Rochdale Training Association (RTA) was formed in 1984 by the merger of the Rochdale Engineering Training School and the Roch Engineering Group Training Scheme. RTA has charitable status and works with approximately 70 local companies, of which, 23 pay an annual subscription to be a member of the association.
2. RTA has a management board of five trustees, who are elected from the member companies. The chief executive reports directly to the board of trustees. RTA employs 14 full-time staff and four part-time staff at its office in Rochdale. RTA also uses four consultants regularly, including two visiting internal verifiers.
3. RTA provides work-based learning for young people and adult learners on training programmes in engineering and business administration. There are a small number of learners on customer service training programmes, but there were too few for this area to be inspected. There are also learners on an employer training pilot scheme.
4. RTA funds its training through Greater Manchester Learning and Skills Council (LSC). In the Rochdale area, from which RTA recruits its learners, the proportion of the local population from minority ethnic groups is 11.4 per cent, according to the 2001 census, compared with 5.4 per cent for the whole of the Northwest. Unemployment in the Northwest in August 2003 was 2.8 per cent, compared with 2.5 per cent nationally.

SCOPE OF PROVISION

Engineering, technology & manufacturing

5. RTA is a specialist provider of modern apprenticeships in production, maintenance, electrical and design engineering, as well as fabrication and welding. There are 62 engineering learners, of whom 58 are advanced modern apprentices and four are foundation modern apprentices. Of these learners, 18 are working towards a national vocational qualification (NVQ) at level 2 and 46 are working towards an NVQ at level 3. RTA also offers 12 places on a pre-apprenticeship course for those learners who are not already in employment or in training and do not have the necessary qualifications. This pre-apprenticeship course leads to an NVQ at level 2 in performing engineering operations. In addition, RTA is involved with local school groups and the Rochdale 14-19 pilot initiatives. None of the learners are from minority ethnic groups, none of them has been identified as having a disability, and there are no female learners. Learners carry out the foundation programme within the first year of their modern apprenticeship. They spend four weeks on the job and then four weeks off the job at the training centre. The advanced modern apprenticeship lasts for 42 months, with the first year common to the foundation programme. All learners attend training at a subcontractor on day release to

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obtain the necessary background knowledge. Employers provide the learners with on-the-job training. RTA provides and assesses key skills training, and subcontracts internal verification. Learners' progress reviews take place every six weeks. There are six members of staff employed in the engineering section.

Business administration, management & professional

6. RTA has four advanced modern apprentices, 17 foundation modern apprentices and five learners working towards NVQs in administration at levels 2. In addition, RTA is running a pilot 13-week programme-led initiative for eight of the foundation modern apprentices, who are developing basic office skills and key skills before starting their employment. Training takes place at RTA's training centre, where one full-time staff member and three part-time tutors provide training and support for learners on all aspects of the courses. Training for the business administration technical certificate is also provided here on one day each week for a period of 13 weeks. Learners are recruited through Connexions, self-referral, or through their employers. Learners are all employed at suitable workplaces in the local area.

7. A new employer training pilot scheme for adults has seven learners on a team leader's training programme and 43 learners working towards an examination-based qualification in information technology (IT).

ABOUT THE INSPECTION

Number of inspectors	5
Number of inspection days	20
Number of learner interviews	44
Number of staff interviews	26
Number of employer interviews	12
Number of subcontractor interviews	2
Number of locations/sites/learning centres visited	13
Number of partner/external agency interviews	17

OVERALL JUDGEMENT

8. The quality of the provision is not adequate to meet the reasonable needs of those receiving it. Training in engineering and business administration is satisfactory, but the leadership and management of the work-based learning and other government-funded training at RTA are unsatisfactory, as is the approach to quality assurance and equality of opportunity.

GRADES

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

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

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

KEY FINDINGS

Achievement and standards

9. There is satisfactory retention for the advanced modern apprentices but it is poor for foundation modern apprentices. In business administration in 2002-03, only 45 per cent of foundation modern apprentices stayed to the end of their training programme.

10. Achievement rates for advanced modern apprentices is satisfactory. For learners starting in 1999-2000, 45 per cent of engineering advanced modern apprentices have already completed the framework. Achievement rates for foundation modern apprentices are poor. The achievement rate for business administration foundation modern apprentices was 50 per cent for 2000-01 and 2001-02 and is currently 10 per cent for 2002-03.

11. Learners are encouraged to work towards additional qualifications. Employers speak highly of learners who have completed their training programmes.

Quality of education and training

12. All the learning sessions observed were graded as satisfactory or better.

13. **There is particularly good support for business administration learners.** Learners consistently report instances of personal support and guidance given by the tutors. Additional individual visits to the learner in the workplace are often arranged and there

are effective links with the employers and supervisors.

14. Key skills forms an integral part of the training programme for business administration learners. Key skills training and assessment are incorporated effectively into the modern apprenticeship programmes and key skills projects are related to the workplace. Work on key skills starts at the beginning of the training programme.

15. **There is an effective programme-led initiative currently being piloted by RTA.** Learners attend a 13-week course at RTA's premises for three days each week to develop skills to enable them to fit into the workplace at the start of their employment as foundation modern apprentices. The training programme is well structured and learners study key skills in application of number, communication and IT, jobsearch skills and office skills. Learners also work towards a technical certificate. Learners are assigned to a mentor and have individual guidance and support sessions included in their timetables.

16. **There is good practical skills development for engineering learners.** All learning sessions observed were good. Tutors provide much individual coaching during off-the-job training sessions and use a variety of teaching methods to engage learners.

17. **The log books used by engineering learners at level 2 and level 3 are particularly well presented.** The drawings and written work are neat, clear and suitably detailed.

18. **There is good monitoring of engineering learners.** Learners normally progress at a rate suited to the qualification. Progress charts are displayed in the workshops. Learners can easily see their progress for both practise phases of skill development and assessment. Each learners' file has a coloured, computer-generated monitoring sheet. This is updated every three months. This shows learners' progress towards their NVQ and key skills qualification and highlights slow progress.

19. **There is good availability of additional qualifications.** Many learners take additional qualifications to their framework. The additional qualifications available match learners' interests. Learners are encouraged by employers to take additional qualifications.

20. **There is good support for learners in the workplace.** There are strong links with supportive employers. Employers speak highly of RTA's training and their recruitment of good learners. Most employers transfer all initial aspects of the recruitment process to RTA. Training officers frequently visit employers for liaison, assessment and review purposes.

21. **Some business administration learners are making slow progress towards achieving individual units of their NVQ, despite having been on the training programme for many months.** Learners who had left the training programme following redundancy were unable to be accredited for the work they had already completed. Action plans and progress review documents show that learners' slow progress has been discussed with them. To date, there has been insufficient improvement in relation to this.

22. **Engineering learners have a poor understanding of modern apprenticeship**

framework requirements. They are not all aware of all the elements of a modern apprenticeship training programme.

23. The practical facilities for off-the-job training are insufficient to support the number of learners that require welding training.

24. Assessment practice is inadequate in engineering. Assessment is fair and is planned with regard to learners' progress. There is insufficient assessment by observation and RTA relies too much on written evidence and witness testimony in learners' portfolios. Such testimonies and photographic evidence are not always authenticated fully.

25. There is an unsystematic approach to the support of learners' literacy and numeracy skills. Initial assessment comprises testing of learners' literacy and numeracy skills accompanied by a mechanical aptitude test, followed by key skills tests. Individual learners' support needs are diagnosed. This information is communicated to subcontractors but not shared with the tutors at RTA. The subcontractor does not act on this information. At RTA there is no structured programme of literacy and numeracy support to help learners improve and develop their skills.

Leadership and management

26. RTA has effective links with employers. RTA's management board of trustees comprises representatives of local employers. The strategic plan depends on the involvement of employers in training. There is great emphasis on staff developing and maintaining links with local employers, who have helped RTA to identify a broader range of training programmes to meet the needs of the local community.

27. There is a small, cohesive and committed team in business administration. There is a culture of continuous improvement in the department. Communication takes place informally everyday and there are scheduled meetings. Minutes of the meeting are recorded and actions are identified in them. Course-planning is centred on the needs of the individual learner and tutor's response to problems is swift and sympathetic.

28. The arrangements to quality assure training are inadequate. There are a number of written procedures for the administrative functions that support contract compliance. However, there are no procedures which govern the key activities of training, such as induction, assessment, formal progress reviews and the delivery of training. Observations of assessment and training practice are carried out, but the outcomes and feedback of these observations are verbal only. RTA does not sufficiently monitor the quality of training provided by employers or subcontractors and has not developed appropriate plans to improve training.

29. RTA's managers make inadequate use of data. RTA collects and records a wide variety of data in its management information system which is capable of producing a range of useful management reports. Since February 2003, a retention officer has been employed to assist in improving learners' retention rates. This post is funded by the local LSC. Much of the retention officers' work has been concentrated on improving the

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management information system and designing management reports, which can be used to develop strategies to improve the rates of retention. However, RTA uses few of these reports. **There are no reports available that analyse the rates of achievement for each training programme by gender, ethnicity or identified additional learning need.**

30. **Co-ordination of training is poor.** No one person is solely responsible for the engineering programmes. The training programmes at levels 2 and 3 are treated as separate activities. Staff have a working knowledge of their own learner group, but there is an over-reliance on informal, verbal communication. There are too few records of discussions regarding problems and actions taken to improve training to enable effective and reliable reviews. Managers rely on anecdotal evidence to measure the quality of training. **There is no structured review of the programmes.**

31. **The promotion and monitoring of equality of opportunity are planned and implemented insufficiently.** There is no planned and comprehensive strategy across RTA's provision to ensure a consistent approach to equal opportunities. RTA collects data on ethnicity, age and disability but does not analyse it or use this information to identify issues for improvement or to support decision-making. **There is poor co-ordination and inadequate quality assurance of training.** RTA has had difficulties with the management of the provision. However, the effect of these weaknesses does not currently have a significant impact on the areas of learning because of the experienced staff and the good links with employers.

The following strengths and weaknesses were identified during this inspection:

Leadership and management

Strengths

- effective links with employers

Weaknesses

- inadequate use of data
- poor co-ordination of training
- insufficient promotion and monitoring of equal opportunities
- inadequate arrangements to quality assure training

Engineering, technology & manufacturing

Strengths

- good practical skills development
- good monitoring of learners' progress
- good availability and achievement of additional qualifications
- good support for learners in the workplace

Weaknesses

- slow progress in key skills achievement for some learners
- poor knowledge of the requirements of the modern apprenticeship framework requirements by learners
- insufficient resources for welding and fabrication training
- inadequate assessment practice
- insufficiently routine approach to the support of literacy and numeracy skills

Business administration, management & professional

Strengths

- good support for learners
- good key skills integration
- effective pre-apprenticeship initiative

Weaknesses

- low retention rate for modern apprentices
- slow completion of NVQ units for some learners

WHAT LEARNERS LIKE ABOUT ROCHDALE TRAINING ASSOCIATION:

- good instructors
- good accommodation and resources
- helpful, friendly and supportive staff
- training at the training centre and college is good - 'we learn lots of different skills'
- being treated as adults
- small group sizes in business administration training programmes

WHAT LEARNERS THINK ROCHDALE TRAINING ASSOCIATION COULD IMPROVE:

- more hand tools and machines in the workshop
- instruction in spring-making
- training plans
- a fast-track modern apprenticeship in engineering
- more vending machines for refreshments
- an air-conditioning system in the workshop

KEY CHALLENGES FOR ROCHDALE TRAINING ASSOCIATION:

- develop effective communications to share good practice across the organisation
- formalise reporting arrangements with subcontractors
- analyse data to identify trends
- carry out comprehensive reviews of the training programmes
- plan training for all staff
- develop literacy and numeracy support for learners
- develop effective strategies to improve learners' retention rates
- start the assessment process for unit accreditation early in the training programme for all learners

DETAILED INSPECTION FINDINGS

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

Grade 4

The following strengths and weaknesses were identified during this inspection:

Strengths

- effective links with employers

Weaknesses

- inadequate use of data
- poor co-ordination of training
- insufficient promotion and monitoring of equal opportunities
- inadequate arrangements to quality assure training

32. Over the past two years, much time and energy has been invested in recovering the organisation from a difficult financial position. A number of staff have retired and been made redundant. There is now a strategic plan for the development of the company, supported by a business plan.

33. RTA has effective links with employers. This strength was identified in the most recent self-assessment report. RTA's board of directors comprises representatives of local employers. The strategic plan depends on the involvement of employers in training and there is great emphasis on staff developing and maintaining links with local employers, who have helped RTA to identify a broader range of training programmes to meet the needs of the local community. Training staff make contact with employers, as well as the learners' workplace supervisors, during their frequent visits to the workplaces. Some local employers use RTA as a recruitment agent to fill their training vacancies. RTA is aware of any potential modern apprenticeship vacancies and has been effective in assisting those modern apprentices who have been made redundant by one employer to find employment locally and remain in training. The introduction of a new monitoring system for engineering modern apprentices has improved communication and raised employers' awareness of their learners' progress.

34. RTA's management of resources is satisfactory. Its staffing levels are appropriate for the number of learners and the training accommodation is satisfactory. Staff appraisal is satisfactory. RTA reviews staff performance and discusses their development needs. RTA derives its performance targets for recruitment and the learners' retention and achievement rates from the annual business plan.

35. RTA is introducing a new model of appraisal but this has not yet been applied to all staff. A number of staff have not received an appraisal within the last 18 months, due in part to the absence, through illness, of three key members of senior staff in the nine months before inspection.

36. RTA's managers make inadequate use of data. This weakness was partly recognised in the most recent self-assessment report. RTA collects and records a wide variety of data in its management information system, which is capable of producing a range of useful management reports. Since February 2003, a retention officer has been employed to assist in improving the learners' retention rates. This post is funded by the local LSC. Much of the retention officer's work has been concentrated on improving the management information system and designing management reports, which can be used to develop strategies to improve the rates of retention. However, RTA uses few of these reports. There are no reports available that analyse the rates of achievement for each training programme by gender, ethnicity or identified additional learning need. RTA produces monthly reports to support accurate claims for contract payments and holds informal meetings every three months to discuss the 'balanced scorecard' reports, which it uses to measure progress towards the completion of the staff performance targets.

37. The co-ordination of training is poor. This weakness was not recognised in the most recent self-assessment report. No one is solely responsible for the engineering training programmes. The programmes at levels 2 and 3 are treated as separate activities. Staff have a working knowledge of their own learner group, but there is an over-reliance on informal, verbal communication. There are too few records of discussions regarding problems and the actions taken to improve training to enable effective and reliable reviews. Managers rely on anecdotal evidence to measure the quality of training. There is no structured review of the training programmes.

38. There is no schedule of regular meetings of training staff. RTA relies on the informal, verbal communications with staff and subcontractors to identify issues and monitor the learners' progress. The staff in each occupational area held occasional meetings, but in engineering, records are not made of these discussions, the decisions made and the actions required. The absence of these records prevents RTA from carrying out an accurate assessment of the effectiveness of changes made to the training programmes, identifying trends across them and sharing instances of good practice.

39. The quality assurance procedures for the engineering and business administration training programmes have been developed separately. The overall strategy for the provision of literacy and numeracy support is unsatisfactory. RTA has established separate practices. In business administration, learners' needs are recorded and supported.

Equality of opportunity

Contributory grade 4

40. RTA has a series of equal opportunities policy statements. There are statements on equal opportunities in general, harassment and disability. The statements were last updated in September 2002 but they do not refer to any legislation after 1995. The equal opportunities policy is being updated.

41. The promotion and monitoring of equality of opportunity are planned and implemented insufficiently. There is no planned and comprehensive strategy across

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RTA's provision to ensure a consistent approach to equal opportunities. RTA collects data on ethnicity, age and disability but does not analyse it or use this information to identify issues for improvement or to support decision-making.

42. Among RTA's staff there is inconsistent understanding of the wider equal opportunities issues. There is no planned strategy to provide staff training on the range of equal opportunities and disability issues. Only one member of staff has received training in equal opportunities in the past two years and some staff have not received any training on equality of opportunity. RTA does not always monitor equal opportunities in the workplace.

43. A member of staff was given responsibility for equal opportunities in the summer of 2002 and the LSC provided some development training and support. A series of workshops and learning materials were developed and used with the business administration learners. The resources included a series of questions, which could be used at progress reviews, and several well-designed worksheets were used to follow up and reinforce the learners' knowledge after they had attended the equal opportunities workshop. Publicity materials used to promote courses have recently been updated, but they still do not sufficiently promote the training programmes to under-represented groups.

44. Learners on business administration training programmes are well informed and can recall the training they have received. Learners on engineering training programmes demonstrated some knowledge of equal opportunities issues. The learners' progress review process includes discussion on equal opportunities. In all learners' progress reviews, appropriate questions are chosen from a series developed by RTA's staff member responsible for equal opportunities.

45. The proportion of the local Rochdale population from minority ethnic groups is 11.4 per cent, compared with 5.4 per cent in the Northwest. RTA has one learner from a minority ethnic group. Some initiatives have been taken to attract learners from minority ethnic groups, including attending events targeting young people and taking school pupils on work experience. There are no female learners on the engineering training programmes. The training centre has access for learners with restricted mobility. All training rooms are on the ground floor and the toilet is accessible for wheelchair users. RTA has a mobile induction loop system for the use of learners with hearing impairments.

Quality assurance

Contributory grade 4

46. Internal verification arrangements are satisfactory and meet the requirements of the awarding body.

47. The use of feedback is satisfactory. Feedback from learners and employers has been gathered by an interview survey carried out during the summer of 2003. The results of these interviews have been analysed and some recommendations have been made, such as the development of the monitoring system for engineering learners. Although RTA seeks feedback from learners and employers, it does not routinely gather feedback from

the subcontractors or its own staff.

48. The arrangements to quality assure training are inadequate. This weakness was partly recognised in the most recent self-assessment report. There are a number of written procedures for the administrative functions that support contract compliance. However, there are no procedures which govern the key activities of training, such as induction, assessment, formal progress reviews and the delivery of training. Observations of assessment and training practice are carried out, but the outcomes and feedback of these observations are verbal only. There is no record made that might be used to indicate performance over time or used during staff appraisal to support staff training needs. There are no specified standards for the quality of training. RTA does not sufficiently monitor the quality of training provided by employers or subcontractors and has not developed appropriate plans to improve training.

49. RTA uses two subcontractors to provide aspects of the engineering training. There are service level agreements with each of the subcontractors. These state the expected training and support provision and the requirements for the feedback regarding learners' progress, attendance, the quality assurance of training and achievement. However, the agreement is insufficiently thorough and is poorly defined. For example, the provider will, from time to time, ask for reports regarding the progress of individual learners. There are no formal meetings between RTA and the college. A member of RTA's staff visits the subcontractors regularly, but makes no records of these meetings and does not agree any necessary actions. Observations of subcontractors' training sessions are carried out occasionally. There are no records of these observations and the subcontractors have not provided RTA with any reports of their own quality assurance observations.

50. RTA has produced a self-assessment report each year since 1999. Senior staff write an initial draft of the report and share this with all staff to add their comments and make suggestions. The most recent report was produced in November 2003. It is insufficiently analytical and self-critical, and contains little information about trends in each of the occupational areas or about the quality of training and assessment. The inspectors did not give the same grades as the self-assessment report. Inspectors identified a number of additional weaknesses and judged some of the strengths to be no more than normal practice. Staff do not share good practice. For example, the development of integrated key skills assignments within business administration training has not been carried in the engineering training programmes. RTA recognises some of the weaknesses identified at inspection in the previous self-assessment report, but there is little evidence of effective action to make improvements. A strength identified in previous inspections about the effective use of staff meetings to discuss improvements in training has been undermined, as there is no current schedule for staff meetings.

AREAS OF LEARNING

Engineering, technology & manufacturing

Grade 3

Programmes inspected	Number of learners	Contributory grade
Work-based learning for young people	62	3

The following strengths and weaknesses were identified during this inspection:

Strengths

- good practical skills development
- good monitoring of learners' progress
- good availability and achievement of additional qualifications
- good support for learners in the workplace

Weaknesses

- slow progress in key skills achievement for some learners
- poor knowledge of the requirements of the modern apprenticeship framework requirements by learners
- insufficient resources for welding and fabrication training
- inadequate assessment practice
- insufficiently routine approach to the support of literacy and numeracy skills

Achievement and standards

51. The standard of the learners' practical work is good and their technical knowledge is at least satisfactory, with some examples of high standards. Learners at all levels are usually able to carry out routine tasks without constant supervision, work safely, and use appropriate tools competently. The advanced modern apprentices successfully exhibit a range of more complex practical skills and background knowledge allied to their training programme. All of the learners benefit from individual on-the-job training.

52. The retention rate for the advanced modern apprentices has been satisfactory for those starting the framework in 1999-2000. It is too early to judge retention rates for learners starting in the past three years. The achievement rate for the advanced modern apprentices is satisfactory for the year 1999-2000. Good completion of the modern apprenticeship framework is considered a strength in the most recent self-assessment report.

53. The learners' levels of literacy and numeracy skills are adequate for their training programmes, but some learners will require continued support to enable learners to be successful. While learners' writing skills are reasonably consistent, with some spelling mistakes, their basic mathematical skills are at a lower level and require greater support

and practise. The results of the learners' diagnostic testing confirm these findings. Employers appreciate the good quality of training that their modern apprentices receive and speak highly of learners who have completed their training programmes.

54. The retention and achievement rates of foundation modern apprentices are poor and have been consistently so for the three-year period from 2000 to 2002. There were no modern apprentices during 2002-03, five in 2003-04 and four remain on the programme. The achievement rate of key skills is poor for foundation modern apprentices; however, it is satisfactory for the advanced modern apprentices.

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

LSC funded work-based learning																
Advanced modern apprenticeships (AMA)																
	2003-04		2002-03		2001-02		2000-01		1999-2000							
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Number of starts	16		26		15		25		51							
Retained*	0		0		0	0	0	0	44	86						
Successfully completed	0		0		0	0	0	0	23	45						
Still in learning	14		17		11	73	13	52	3	6						

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

LSC funded work-based learning																
Foundation modern apprenticeships (FMA)																
	2003-04		2002-03		2001-02		2000-01		1999-2000							
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Number of starts	5				19		14		10							
Retained*	0				6	32	0	0	1	10						
Successfully completed	0				5	26	0	0	0	0						
Still in learning	4				0	0	0	0	0	0						

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

Quality of education and training

55. There is good practical skills development. Inspectors observed three learning sessions, all of which they judged good. Good-quality training is identified as a strength in the self-assessment report. Tutors give much individual coaching during off-the-job practical training sessions and use a mix of teaching methods to engage the learners. The teaching methods include good use of visual aids, clear class demonstrations and the additional use of appropriate allied work packages. RTA encourages group work to allow for the differentiation of work patterns set for the different types of engineer in the

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class. For example, the production and maintenance engineering learners are making a miniature heat engine with the emphasis on machining, while the welders are producing an alternative heat engine with the emphasis on welding and fabrication. Learners interact well in class and this often leads to discussion during job-planning sessions, where learners draw on previous knowledge and skills. Tutors use general and directed questioning, together with continuous monitoring of practical competences, to monitor learning.

56. The monitoring of learners' progress is good. Learners normally progress at a rate suited to the qualification. RTA displays progress charts in the workshops and learners can readily see their progress for both practise phases of skill development and assessment. Learners' files have a coloured, computer-generated monitoring sheet, which RTA updates every three months. This indicates the learners' progress towards their NVQ and key skills attainment, and highlights slow progress. RTA recognises the monitoring of learners' progress as a strength in its most recent self-assessment report.

57. Some learners take qualifications additional to their modern apprenticeship framework. Training programmes available appear to match learners' aspirations and employers comment favourably on the engineering routes available at level 3. Those offered include manual handling, emergency aid at work, abrasive wheels course and portable appliance testing. In addition, first year modern apprentices who make good progress have the opportunity to add additional units for their NVQ at level 2. These are agreed with their employer in some cases or simply support their NVQ specialism. RTA's most recent self-assessment report identified this as a strength.

58. There is good support for learners in the workplace. RTA has strong links with supportive employers and recognises them as a strength in its most recent self-assessment report. Companies speak highly of RTA's input into training and their recruitment of good-quality learners. Most employers transfer all initial aspects of recruitment to RTA and retain the final decision about employment. The training officer makes frequent visits to companies for liaison, assessment and review purposes. The logbooks used at level 2 and level 3 are well presented. The drawings and written work are neat, clear and suitably detailed. Learners' progress reviews are carried out every six weeks and are sometimes attended by the workplace supervisors. The standard of learners' progress reviews is satisfactory, although tight short-term targets are not always set. Employers allow learners any time required to complete their logbook entries. Workplace supervisors move learners to jobs that have opportunities for them to gather relevant evidence.

59. The quality of on-the-job training is satisfactory. The learners have the opportunity to develop a range of practical and technical skills. The facilities in the workplace for learners to gather evidence range from satisfactory to good. The planning of on-the-job training is better in the larger companies, where the learners move between sections which offer opportunities to develop specific skills.

60. Staff are occupationally competent, experienced and possess the instructional techniques qualification and assessor and verifier awards.

61. There is slow progress in key skills training for some learners. Learners now start their work on key skills in year one of the modern apprenticeship. Some learners are making slow progress to complete their work and to pass the appropriate tests. Learners have the most difficulty with communications at level 3. IT assignments have been developed within the context of engineering. The self-assessment report states that learners have little understanding of key skills and little use is made of evidence collected from NVQ work. It does not mention slow progress.

62. Learners have a poor understanding of the modern apprenticeship framework requirements. They are not all aware of all the elements of a modern apprenticeship programme. This is not mentioned in the self-assessment report.

63. The practical facilities for off-the-job training are insufficient to support the numbers of learners that require training in welding. This is not recognised as a weakness in the self-assessment report.

64. Assessment practice is inadequate. This is not identified as a weakness in the self-assessment report. Assessment is fair and is planned with regard to the learners' progress but there is insufficient assessment by observation. Recent external verifiers' reports have listed no major actions for RTA to carry out and have commented favourably on some assessment documents and the quality of learners' portfolios of evidence. Written evidence and witness testimony in learners' portfolios are not always authenticated fully. Internal verification is generally thorough and well planned.

65. There is an unsystematic approach to the support of learners' literacy and numeracy skills. Initial assessment comprises testing of learners' literacy and numeracy skills accompanied by a mechanical aptitude test, followed by key skills tests. Individual learners' support needs are diagnosed. This information is communicated to subcontractors but not shared with the tutors at RTA. The subcontractor does not act on this information. At RTA there is no structured programme of literacy and numeracy support to help learners improve and develop their skills. Informal support is not recorded on learners' files. There is no progress monitoring in the improvement of skills, nor any retesting and diagnosis to check if learners have improved and met standards. This weakness impacts on the development of the necessary key skills. RTA does not have the necessary systems to monitor this process systematically. This is identified in the self-assessment report.

Leadership and management

66. There are six staff in the engineering section. One is a workshop manager and awarding body centre co-ordinator, and leads the level 2 qualification team of three instructors. This team works within RTA. There is a training officer responsible for level 3 on-the-job training. There is also a member of staff responsible for initial assessment, literacy and numeracy skills support and key skills training. These three teams within the engineering section are autonomous, with team leaders responsible to the chief executive. In addition, there is a pre-apprenticeship co-ordinator and retention officer.

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The retention officer is funded by the local LSC. Staff attend essential training courses. Internal communication is informal and team meetings are infrequent, with seven in the past four years. External communications with employers are good.

67. All staff have the opportunity to make a contribution to the self-assessment report but generally it does not reflect an accurate assessment of the provision.

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

Programmes inspected	Number of learners	Contributory grade
Other government-funded provision	56	3
Work-based learning for young people	33	3

The following strengths and weaknesses were identified during this inspection:

Strengths

- good support for learners
- good key skills integration
- effective pre-apprenticeship initiative

Weaknesses

- low retention rate for modern apprentices
- slow completion of NVQ units for some learners

Achievement and standards

68. The retention rate for modern apprentices is low. In 2001-02, only 50 per cent of foundation modern apprentices stayed to the end of their training programme. In 2002-03, the figure fell to 45 per cent. Retention rates are now improving of the starters in 2003-04, 85 per cent remain in learning. The retention rates for advanced modern apprentices for 2001-02 are 50 per cent and 33 per cent for 2002-03. This improves significantly to 100 per cent for 2003-04. For NVQ learners, the retention rate for 2002-03 is satisfactory at 78 per cent. Retention of modern apprentices was identified as a strength in the self-assessment report but this was based on the improving figures for the past year.

69. Achievement rates for foundation modern apprentices are low at 50 per cent in each of the years 2000-01 and 2001-02. Achievement rates are currently less than 10 per cent for 2002-03. From 2000-01 and 2001-02, achievement for advanced modern apprentices was better at 100 per cent and 50 per cent. For the nine NVQ starts in 2002-03, two have successfully completed and five are still in learning. RTA identified achievement as a strength in its most recent self-assessment report based on current achievement rates.

70. All learners who started in 2003-04 on the employer training pilot to take the internationally recognised computer qualification are still on the course.

71. RTA encourages its learners to work towards additional qualifications and many study key skills at higher levels than required within the modern apprenticeship framework. RTA identified this as a strength in the self-assessment report.

ROCHDALE TRAINING ASSOCIATION

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

LSC funded work-based learning																
Advanced modern apprenticeships (AMA)																
	2003-04		2002-03		2001-02		2000-01		1999-2000							
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Number of starts	1		3		4		2		1							
Retained*	0		0		2	50	2	100	1	100						
Successfully completed	0		0		2	50	2	100	1	100						
Still in learning	1		1		2	50	0	0	0	0						

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

LSC funded work-based learning																
Foundation modern apprenticeships (FMA)																
	2003-04		2002-03		2001-02		2000-01		1999-2000							
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Number of starts	15		11		4		4		3							
Retained*	0		1		2	50	2	50	1	33						
Successfully completed	0		1		2	50	2	50	1	33						
Still in learning	13		4		0	0	0	0	0	0						

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

LSC funded work-based learning																
NVQ Training																
	2003-04		2002-03													
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Number of starts	8		9													
Retained*	0		7	78												
Successfully completed	0		2	22												
Still in learning	8		5	56												

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

Other government funded																
	2003-04		2002-03													
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Number of starts	51		9													
Retained*	0		7	78												
Successfully completed	0		2	22												
Still in training	51		5	56												

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

Quality of education and training

72. The support for learners is good. Learners consistently report instances of personal and individual support and guidance by assessors. For example, one learner with epilepsy could not attend weekly off-the-job key skills training sessions and was about to leave the training programme. RTA arranged additional individual visits to the learners' workplace every fortnight to provide individual key skills support. Employers are supportive and RTA's staff have formed effective links. Evidence needs are discussed with employers and needs for additional on-the-job training are identified. Assessors keep employers fully updated of learners' progress. Employers express a high level of satisfaction with the service provided by RTA, especially since the formation of the new RTA business administration assessor team. Employers often use RTA as a recruitment service for new staff. RTA supplies names of candidates and the employer interviews and selects the most suitable young person for their modern apprenticeship. Some employers have used this recruitment service for many years and have retained the modern apprentices on their staff at the end of their training programme.

73. There is good integration of key skills. Key skills training and assessment are incorporated effectively into the modern apprenticeship programmes and projects are related to the workplace. For example, presentations given by learners incorporate real workplace experience and are often delivered to colleagues in the workplace. Learners clearly understand the usefulness of completing the key skills training and started work on them very early in the training programme.

74. RTA is piloting an effective pre-apprenticeship programme. Learners attend a 13-week course at RTA's premises for three days each week, to develop the necessary skills to enable them to fit into the workplace smoothly at the start of their foundation modern apprenticeship. The programme is well structured and learners study communication skills, basic IT, jobsearch skills and office skills. Learners are assigned to a mentor and have individual guidance and support sessions incorporated into their timetables. This programme has had a significant impact on the retention rate for modern apprentices. This was identified as a strength in the self-assessment report.

ROCHDALE TRAINING ASSOCIATION

75. Learners on the employer training pilot are mainly working towards an internationally recognised computer qualification. Learners reported that they were completely satisfied with the teaching at RTA. Resources for this course are the same as for the modern apprentices in business administration. Learners are able to attend at various times to suit their needs.

76. Assessment practice for modern apprentices is satisfactory. Assessments are planned and learners are clear about how the evidence meets the required standard. Learners' portfolios contain a good range of evidence and are generally well presented and referenced. Learners are visited frequently in the workplace by assessors and have clear action plans.

77. All observed taught sessions are satisfactory or better. Tutors are knowledgeable and use materials appropriate to the level of the training programme. Tutors check frequently, to confirm that learning has taken place.

78. Internal verification procedures are satisfactory. A consultant internal verifier visits the training centre each month and attends staff meetings as well as leading standardisation meetings. Assessors are accompanied into the workplace for observation of assessment practices and given clear feedback.

79. Learners joining RTA receive a satisfactory induction course during their first week at work. It includes basic course requirements and handouts on health and safety, grievance procedures, and equality of opportunity. The contents of these are briefly discussed. These issues are subsequently covered during progress reviews and during their training for the technical certificate during off-the-job training days. Learners also receive a workplace induction. Their recall of induction to their NVQ qualification is satisfactory.

80. Accommodation is satisfactory. Training rooms are equipped with up-to-date computer equipment and comfortable, adjustable chairs. There is a good range of teaching material to support key skills and learners have access to booklets and handouts, which they can use at home or in the workplace. Staff are occupationally qualified and both part-time assessors are working towards teaching qualifications. The self-assessment report identified inadequate staff resources as a weakness. Inspectors did not identify this as a weakness.

81. There is initial assessment of learners' literacy, numeracy and language skills. Learners also take a key skills diagnostic test. For learners who require additional support, individual tuition is provided either at the training centre or in the learner's workplace. However, learners' progress is not sufficiently detailed and it is unclear precisely what support is provided.

82. A few learners are making slow progress towards achievement of individual units of their NVQ, although they have been on the training programme for many months. In one instance a learner who had left the programme following redundancy was unable to be accredited for the work they had already completed. Action plans and progress

review documents show that their slow progress has been discussed with learners. Changes are being made to improve this but it is too early to judge their impact.

Leadership and management

83. There is a small, cohesive and committed team in business administration. There is a culture of continuous improvement in the department. Communication takes place informally everyday and there are scheduled meetings. Minutes of the meeting are recorded and actions are identified in them. Course-planning is centred on the needs of the individual learner and tutors' response to problems is swift and sympathetic.

84. RTA is active in its relationships with local employers and staff are encouraged to form and retain those links. This forms part of the overall strategic plan. The business administration department has recently introduced three new programmes. The pre-apprenticeship initiative is a 13-week training programme designed to give necessary skills and background knowledge for foundation modern apprentices before they start on their work placements. The employer training pilot offers the European computer driving licence and team management courses to learners over the age of 25. There has been good participation on this pilot.

85. Learners receive an effective induction which explains equality of opportunity. Learners are able to recall accurately what has been covered and relate it to their own working environment.

86. The organisation's central management information systems are inadequate and accurate data relating to learners was difficult to obtain. Departmental records about learners were kept up to date.

87. The self-assessment report was not sufficiently critical and did not correctly identify problems with retention and achievement.