

# REINSPECTION REPORT

## **Rochdale Training Association Reinspection**

**10 March 2005**



ADULT LEARNING  
INSPECTORATE

## ROCHDALE TRAINING ASSOCIATION 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**

## **Rochdale Training Association Reinspection**

### **Contents**

#### **Summary**

Description of the provider	1
Scope of provision	1
About the reinspection	2
Overall judgement	2
Grades	2
Key findings	3

#### **Detailed reinspection findings**

Leadership and management	8
Equality of opportunity	10
Quality assurance	10
Engineering, technology & manufacturing	12
Business administration, management & professional	16

## REINSPECTION REPORT

### DESCRIPTION OF THE PROVIDER

1. Rochdale Training Association (RTA) is a training provider with charitable status that was formed in 1984 by the merger of the Rochdale Engineering Training School and the Rochdale Engineering Group Training Scheme. RTA is located in central Rochdale and works with over 100 local companies to provide employment or work experience for its youth and adult learners. Thirty-one of these companies are full members of RTA. The management board consists of elected representatives from the member companies. Twenty-two staff are employed and a further eight staff are used on a regular but part-time basis.

2. RTA contracts with Greater Manchester Learning and Skills Council (LSC) for a range of programmes that includes modern apprenticeships, programme-led apprenticeships and the Employment Training Pilot (ETP). It also contracts with Lancashire LSC for the ETP. Current programmes include the engineering, technology and manufacturing, and business administration, management and professional areas of learning.

3. Rochdale Metropolitan Borough is one of 10 districts that make up Greater Manchester. In 2001 the population was 205,375. In 2004 the unemployment rate was 6.1 per cent, compared with 5 per cent nationally. The proportion of people from minority ethnic groups is 13.9 per cent, and 46.3 per cent of school leavers achieved five or more general certificates of secondary education (GCSEs) at grade C or above, compared with the national average of 53.4 per cent.

### SCOPE OF PROVISION

#### **Engineering, technology & manufacturing**

4. RTA provides apprenticeships and modern apprenticeships in mechanical engineering, fitting, milling, turning, maintenance, fabrication and welding, electrical and electronic engineering and engineering design. Eighty-six learners are in training, of whom 48 are advanced apprentices, 23 are apprentices and 15 are on ETP programmes. Nine of the apprentices are working on the programme-led apprenticeship scheme. Apprentices complete the national vocational qualification (NVQ) at level 2 in year one, and attendance at this stage is made flexible to meet the needs of employers. Apprenticeships are planned for completion in 18 months, and advanced apprenticeships in 42 months. Over 30 employers are involved in work-based learning programmes.

## Business administration, management & professional

5. Seventy-one learners are training on the business administration programmes, of whom 11 are apprentices and four are advanced apprentices. There are 56 learners on the ETP scheme. All the learners are employed and work in a wide variety of workplaces, including large retailing organisations, manufacturing and packaging companies, hotels and a housing association. All learners complete an initial assessment and an induction briefing, mostly on an individual basis. Learners receive training and assessment in the workplace and at the training centre. Courses are offered for technical certificates, key skills qualifications and an examination-based qualification in information technology, together with a range of other short courses.

## ABOUT THE REINSPECTION

Number of inspectors	3
Number of inspection days	4
Number of learners interviewed	30
Number of staff interviewed	17
Number of employers interviewed	15
Number of subcontractors interviewed	1
Number of locations/sites/learning centres visited	18

## OVERALL JUDGEMENT

6. At the previous inspection, leadership and management, equality of opportunity and quality assurance were unsatisfactory. Engineering, technology and manufacturing, and business administration, management and professional were satisfactory.

7. At the end of the reinspection process, all aspects of the provision were found to be satisfactory or better.

## GRADES

Grades awarded at previous inspection

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

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

## ROCHDALE TRAINING ASSOCIATION REINSPECTION

Engineering, technology & manufacturing	3
Contributory grades:	
Apprenticeships for young people	3

Business administration, management & professional	3
Contributory grades:	
Other government-funded provision	3
Apprenticeships 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

Engineering, technology & manufacturing	3
Contributory grades:	
Apprenticeships for young people	3
Employer training pilot	2

Business administration, management & professional	2
Contributory grades:	
Employer training pilot	2
Apprenticeships for young people	2

## KEY FINDINGS

### Achievement and standards

8. **In engineering, achievements of NVQs at level 2 are good** for apprentices and adults on the ETP programme.

9. The retention rates during the period 2004-05 for all apprenticeship programmes are very good. All apprentices have been retained.

10. **In business administration, retention and achievement rates are good for the**

**apprenticeship and ETP programmes.** Poor retention rates and the slow completion of NVQ units were identified as weaknesses at the previous inspection.

11. Retention is good on the ETP programme, with 100 per cent retained in 2002-03 and 15 out of 44 learners have completed the programme in 2003-04, with 29 learners still on programme. All 26 starters on the 2004-05 intake are still in training. In the first year of the programme, 2002-03, 77 per cent of learners achieved their qualifications.

12. **Skills development is good in engineering.** Work produced in the training centre is of a very good standard, as is the portfolio and logbook work.

13. Many learners gain qualifications additional to their apprenticeship framework requirements. The qualifications are relevant to employers' needs and learners' individual requirements.

14. At the previous inspection, some learners made slow progress in key skills training. Since 2004, learners have begun their key skills training during their first year, and most achieve their qualifications within this period.

15. The standard of learners' portfolios in business administration is satisfactory. The evidence is indexed and well organised, and the portfolios contain records of assessment by observation and satisfactory written answers to the knowledge questions.

### **Quality of education and training**

16. Tutors provide good training in the practical and background knowledge aspects of engineering. Coaching is good and tutors use a variety of teaching methods to engage the learners.

17. Learners produce high-quality fabrications in stainless steel and good examples of technical wiring installations in the second and third years of their programmes. Learners are well motivated and respond well to challenges.

18. **The monitoring of learners' progress is very effective.** Learners progress well at level 2 of the NVQ. Clearly displayed progress charts in the workshops provide everyone with an effective guide as to what stage individual learners have reached in their programmes.

19. The well-planned first year of training consists of learners attending on a block-release basis of two or four weeks in the training centre, followed by a similar number of weeks with their employer. On- and off-the-job training is integrated more effectively using these methods. Communications are also more effective.

20. The six-weekly progress reviews are generally satisfactory and learners are set specific, measurable, achievable, realistic and time-related targets. Employers do not have sufficient involvement in discussions about workplace targets at level 3 of the NVQ.



21. At the previous inspection, some assessment practice was inadequate. Assessment is now satisfactory.

22. Support for learners in the workplace is satisfactory. All learners interviewed had progressed through and enjoyed their training, and no problems were reported.

23. **Learners' workplace skills are well developed in business administration.** They successfully attain their unit achievement targets. Learners' progress is monitored effectively. Any shortfalls in meeting programme objectives are identified.

24. Learners have good opportunities for career progression by applying the skills they learn. Optional units focus on the demands of the job. These units change if the demands of the job change. Learners have progressed to supervisory and managerial positions based on the training they have received, and the ability to work under pressure.

25. **Learners are well supported** by their employers and their assessors. Employers and assessors work as a team to help their learners. Assessors provide good pastoral support when needed.

26. All learners receive an initial assessment. Arrangements for learners with additional learning needs are satisfactory. Learners have access to additional support in literacy, numeracy or language skills, either from their assessor or from a local college of further education.

27. Progress reviews take place every 12 weeks, with satisfactory action-planning for the next quarter. Learners are on appropriate programmes that meet their current needs.

### **Leadership and management**

28. **The operational management of training programmes in both areas of learning is now good.** Effective actions have resolved the weaknesses found at the previous inspection. The provider's strong links with employers and other external agencies have been further developed.

29. RTA's use of data was a weakness at the previous inspection. **Much-improved systems provide managers and teams with data in a number of formats** to enable staff to monitor learners' progress against set targets. Regular staff and management meetings review learners' progress and the retention of learners.

30. **The current three-year business plan for 2004-07 is not detailed enough** regarding the achievement of year on year targets. Headline objectives and subsequent targets are vague in relation to their effect on individual areas of learning. Targets do not include consideration of their effects on income and expenditure for the period of the plan.

31. The promotion of equal opportunities and diversity has improved since the previous inspection. All staff have undergone training designed to improve their understanding

## ROCHDALE TRAINING ASSOCIATION REINSPECTION

and awareness of equality and diversity issues.

32. The amended equal opportunities policy now fully reflects all the current legislation. RTA is aware of the requirements of the Disability Discrimination Act 1995, and although the upper floors of the training centre present access problems for learners with mobility difficulties, alternative arrangements are available to meet their needs.

33. RTA actively promotes its training to under-represented groups. However, the provider does not have well-developed strategies to effectively challenge vocational stereotypes and encourage learners from these groups.

34. Employers and learners now have a better understanding of equality and diversity. Learners' understanding is checked at progress reviews and by the annual evaluation questionnaire. In engineering, the employment rights and responsibilities unit provides additional knowledge and understanding.

35. A newsletter aimed at learners and employers actively promotes training and celebrates learners' success in a positive style. Good role models illustrated in the newsletter promote training to a wide range of individuals.

36. A comprehensive quality improvement manual contains procedures for all the major areas that concern the learner, as well as processes to manage the business of training provision. An internal audit process ensures compliance. The staff who carry out this role have received training in the auditing process. An audit schedule exists for all the quality improvement processes.

37. External verifier reports for both areas of learning are positive and indicate that RTA meets all awarding body requirements.

38. RTA's relationships with the external consultants who carry out assessment and verification roles are managed through service-level agreements. A detailed agreement between RTA and a local college ensures that RTA receives detailed information about learners' progress, and that RTA can access the college quality improvement systems.

39. The new system for observing teaching and learning is effective, but only the business administration team fully implemented the process by the target date. **The engineering team has been slow to implement this procedure and has not met the completion target date.**

40. The self-assessment process has improved and now involves all staff, as well as including the views and comments of learners and employers. Inspectors agreed with many judgements in the current version. **RTA has developed a detailed and comprehensive action and development plan.** This plan focuses on the strengths and weaknesses identified at the previous inspection.

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

### **Leadership and management**

#### **Strengths**

- very effective continuing links with employers and other external agencies
- good post-inspection action and development plan
- good use of data to monitor learners' progress

#### **Weaknesses**

- insufficient detail in business plan

### **Engineering, technology & manufacturing**

#### **Strengths**

- good achievement rates of NVQs at level 2
- good acquisition of skills by learners
- very effective monitoring of progress
- good operational management of training programmes

#### **Weaknesses**

- slow implementation of observations of teaching and learning

### **Business administration, management & professional**

#### **Strengths**

- good retention and achievement rates for apprenticeship and ETP programmes
- good development of workplace skills
- good support for learners
- good management of the area of learning

#### **Weaknesses**

- no significant weaknesses identified

## DETAILED REINSPECTION FINDINGS

### LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

**Grade 2**

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

#### **Strengths**

- very effective continuing links with employers and other external agencies
- good post-inspection action and development plan
- good use of data to monitor learners' progress

#### **Weaknesses**

- insufficient detail in business plan

41. RTA's links with employers were a strength at the previous inspection. This strength remains and is being developed. The board of directors consists of local employers, and a number of other employers are members of RTA. Some members are very long-standing and a significant number of new members have been recruited recently. Good two-way communications ensure that each organisation benefits fully from the association. Learners' work placements and employee recruitment activities are mutually beneficial. RTA provides good support and assistance to learners and employees in these companies who find themselves made redundant, or who wish to change employer.

42. RTA has developed good links with a number of other organisations specifically aimed at developing and improving recruitment from identified under-represented groups. These links include schools with high proportions of pupils from minority ethnic groups.

43. After the previous inspection, RTA developed a detailed and comprehensive action and development plan. This plan focuses on the identified strengths and weaknesses from the previous inspection. Proposed actions clearly identify matters to be resolved or maintained and allocate and record the staff responsible. Improvements include the co-ordination of engineering training and the development of a range of strategies within each area of learning to increase retention and achievement rates of learners.

44. A new member of staff has responsibility for developing the quality improvement systems and for promotion of equality and diversity. A range of staff training initiatives has raised staff's awareness and abilities in a number of areas, such as equality and diversity and observations of teaching and learning.

45. RTA's use of data was a weakness at the previous inspection. Much-improved systems provide managers and teams with data in a number of formats to enable staff to

monitor progress against set targets. Regular staff and management meetings review learners' progress and retention rates. Improved systems are used to monitor learners' progress through their individual programmes.

46. Data is used well in business administration to review learners' progress against retention and achievement targets. Meetings between the manager and individual assessors support the reviews of assessor/learner caseloads. Identified actions are used to support individual learners who are at risk of leaving before completing their programmes or not completing on time.

47. Learners' progress is well monitored in engineering. All learners are monitored using a traffic light system to identify learners at risk or those falling behind the schedule. Learners' progress in relation to their expected completion date is reviewed at regular team meetings. The monitoring of retention rates, however, is not clearly recorded in the minutes of the meetings.

48. Senior staff have been trained in business management to develop their skills in contributing to the planning process. An amended mission statement has been developed. This new statement is concise and focuses effectively on the training aims of RTA.

49. Support for learners' literacy, numeracy and language skills needs is satisfactory. All learners have an initial assessment and diagnosis of their literacy and numeracy skills. Few of the current learners need additional support. Although none of the RTA staff have relevant qualifications, seven are currently attending a further education training course at level 2 and two have started a level 3 course. Arrangements have also been made with the local college to access their learner support unit if necessary. Learners with identified needs receive good additional support from tutors and assessors.

50. The business plan identifies a number of targets relating to recruiting from under-represented groups, greater involvement in 14-19 years activities, and increased marketing of services to a broader range of clients. The plan is largely narrative with large sections describing the current situation in many areas. Some of the terminology used in the plan reinforces existing stereotypes and does not use current terms regarding the apprenticeship schemes.

51. The current three-year business plan for 2004-07 is not sufficiently detailed with regard to the achievement of year on year targets. Work-based learning headline improvement targets relate to 2003-04, whereas the business plan runs from 2004-07. Targets relate to success rates rather than to learners in training and future learners. Headline objectives and subsequent targets are vague in relation to their impact on individual areas of learning. Targets do not include details of their impact on income and expenditure for the period of the business plan. The plan does not sufficiently analyse the company's current performance, or clearly link the improvement plans to actions required or individual targets.

### **Equality of opportunity**

### **Contributory grade 3**

52. RTA is actively promoting its training to under-represented groups. Staff at RTA provide good role models to learners in terms of gender and ethnic background.

53. Employers and learners now have a better understanding of equality and diversity. Learners' understanding is checked at progress reviews and by the annual evaluation questionnaire. In engineering, the employment rights and responsibilities unit provides additional information for learners. A newsletter aimed at learners and employers actively promotes training and focuses on learners' successes in a positive style. Good role models illustrated in the newsletters promote training to a wide range of individuals.

54. RTA's promotion of equal opportunities and diversity is satisfactory and has been maintained since the previous inspection. All staff have had training designed to improve their understanding and awareness of equality and diversity issues. Despite this, they do not fully understand the obstacles to training experienced by under-represented groups. An action and development plan includes maintaining effective links with companies. A number of seminars are provided relating to employment law awareness, with a focus on equal opportunities and diversity issues. Productive links exist and are being further developed with schools, a range of other external organisations and specific community groups. No clear strategies have been developed to challenge existing stereotypes effectively and begin to remove the obstacles to learning experienced by these groups.

### **Quality assurance**

### **Contributory grade 2**

55. Quality improvement procedures at RTA are now good. A comprehensive quality improvement manual includes procedures for all the main areas that affect learners as well as processes to manage the business of training provision. An internal audit process is effective and ensures compliance with procedures. Staff who carry out this role have received training in the auditing process. An audit schedule exists for all the quality improvement processes. A follow-up process ensures that all incidents of non-compliance are resolved.

56. External verifier reports for both areas of learning are positive and indicate that RTA meets all awarding body requirements.

57. Service-level agreements are used to manage RTA's relationships with the external consultants who carry out assessment and verification. A detailed agreement between RTA and a local college ensures that RTA receives detailed information about learners' progress and can access the college quality improvement systems.

58. A new and effective system has been introduced for the observation of teaching and learning, but only the business administration team has fully completed the implementation process by the target date. The engineering team has been slow to implement this process and has not met set targets. No one maintains an overall record of observations to ensure that teams meet completion targets.

59. The self-assessment process has been improved and now involves all staff, as well as

including opinions and comments from learners and employers. Inspectors' judgements matched many of those in the current version of the report.

## AREAS OF LEARNING

### Engineering, technology & manufacturing

Grade 3

Programmes inspected	Number of learners	Contributory grade
Apprenticeships for young people	71	3
Employer training pilot	15	2

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

#### Strengths

- good achievement rates of NVQs at level 2
- good acquisition of skills by learners
- very effective monitoring of progress
- good operational management of training programmes

#### Weaknesses

- slow implementation of observations of teaching and learning

### Achievement and standards

60. Achievements of NVQs at level 2 are good for apprentices and adults on the ETP programme. Pass rates are very good on advanced apprenticeship programmes at between 75 and 95 per cent over the past four years. RTA's expertise gained in the delivery of level 2 NVQ programmes has been successfully applied in the workplace with adult learners. In the first year of the programme, 2002-03, 77 per cent of learners achieved their qualifications. Since then the retention rate is good, averaging 95 per cent over two years. The retention rates in 2004-05 for all apprenticeship programmes are very good at between 80 and 100 per cent.

61. Learners' skills development is good. Tutors provide good training in the practical and background knowledge aspects of engineering, using good coaching methods, and employing a variety of teaching methods to engage the learners. Work produced in the training centre is of a very good standard, as is the portfolio and logbook work. Learners make tools and equipment that will be useful in the workplace. Their employers give learners responsibility for the production of industry-standard work. There are examples of high-quality fabrications in stainless steel and of good technical wiring installations by second- and third-year learners. Learners are well motivated and respond well to challenges.

62. Many learners achieve qualifications additional to their apprenticeship framework requirements. These qualifications are relevant to employers' and learners' needs. Many



learners complete additional units during the first year of training and some progress to level 4 qualifications. Additional training is available in portable appliance testing, information technology (IT) and health and safety-related courses, which are outside framework requirements.

63. At the previous inspection, learners were making slow progress in key skills achievements. Since 2004, learners have begun key skills training during their first year and most achieve their qualifications within this period. Some older learners continue to make slow progress towards the achievement of key skills qualifications. Four learners on advanced apprenticeships who began in 2001-02 are just completing their key skills training. Five out of 15 learners who began in 2002-03 are also just completing their key skills training. A new training officer has the responsibility for improving the achievement rate for key skills qualifications. The overall achievement rates for advanced apprenticeship frameworks are still low.

### **Quality of education and training**

64. RTA's monitoring of learners' progress is very effective. Learners progress well at level 2 NVQ. Progress charts in the workshops provide everyone with a clear guide as to what stage individual learners have reached in their programmes. Learners are able to see their progress at a glance, regarding completion of practical tasks and assessments. Learners' files contain regularly updated, computer-generated progress monitoring sheets. Actions to be taken are discussed at assessor team meetings.

65. The well-planned first year of training consists of learners attending on a block-release basis of two or four weeks in the training centre, followed by a similar number of weeks with their employers. On- and off-the-job training is integrated more effectively using these methods. Communications are also more effective. Staff and learners are able to use examples from the workplace in their training more effectively and demonstrate a good understanding of engineering terminology. Some employers have good training plans for workforce development. Portfolios are generally satisfactory.

66. RTA's initiatives in dealing with schools and colleges are good. A pilot scheme in programme-led training for young people with low GCSE grades has proved successful. Eight learners achieved an NVQ and were placed with companies new to RTA. 'Taster' courses are available for school groups to sample engineering. A good example of effective participation is one group with problems of school attendance. These learners are now working towards an NVQ at level 1. RTA holds a presentation evening for learners at the local town hall.

67. Resources for all the programmes are satisfactory. At the previous inspection, there were insufficient resources for fabrication and welding training.

68. The six-weekly progress reviews are generally satisfactory and learners are set specific, measurable, achievable, realistic and time-related targets. However, employers are not sufficiently involved in discussions about workplace targets at level 3 NVQ.

## ROCHDALE TRAINING ASSOCIATION REINSPECTION

Many employers do not attend progress reviews and receive information at a later stage from training officers.

69. At the previous inspection, some of the assessment practice was inadequate. Assessment practice is now satisfactory. Observations of assessment tasks are now more frequent and take place at stages of the programme appropriate to the needs of employers and learners. Assessors respond well to requests for assessment by learners, who are now better able to identify suitable assessment tasks. Witness testimony however, is not used effectively. No formal procedures exist for witnesses to record evidence of learners' work. In most cases, supervisors sign assessment documents without indicating clearly the actual level of involvement by the learner in the task. Portfolios do not have samples of witnesses' signatures or information about witnesses' job roles.

70. Support for learners in the workplace is satisfactory. All learners interviewed had progressed through and enjoyed their training, with no reported problems. All speak highly of the management of their programme by RTA.

71. Initial assessment for literacy, numeracy and language skills support is adequate. Learners complete a mechanical aptitude test followed by key skills tests. Individual learner support needs are identified.

72. At the previous inspection there was no structured programme of literacy and numeracy support to help learners improve and develop their skills. Formal arrangements for the delivery of individual learning support are still not clear. Learners receive informal additional training on an individual basis or as part of larger groups. Tutors at the subcontracted college are supportive of learners with literacy and numeracy needs.

### **Leadership and management**

73. The operational management of engineering programmes is good. Effective actions have resolved weaknesses identified at the previous inspection, with the exception of the formal procedures to provide support in literacy and numeracy. On- and off-the-job training is satisfactory. Assessment is now satisfactory, a key feature being more assessment by direct observation. Learners receive support at all stages of their programmes and speak very highly of the training and management of programmes.

74. The use of data to assist in the management programmes and monitor equality of opportunity is much improved and is now good. RTA is able to provide more accurate data. Performance is monitored at least every three months. Progression reports are produced which identify learners at risk of leaving before completing the programme. Training officers are allocated learners and are responsible for their training and progress. Twelve-monthly reviews analyse learners' and employers' feedback and monitor yearly progress at level 2 and 3 NVQ. Short-term reviews of performance are held every two months. Progress in all components of the apprenticeship frameworks are reviewed and

actions are taken in areas of concern.

75. The first year of training includes a range of training activities which supports learners' understanding of equality and diversity. Learners' completion of the employment rights and responsibilities aspect of the apprenticeship framework makes a positive contribution to their understanding of equality of opportunity.

76. Arrangements to improve the quality of training at the previous inspection were inadequate. Most quality improvement arrangements have now been formally documented and are applied to the programmes. Procedures and guidelines apply to the key processes and training activities. Short-term activities, which are having an impact, include performance reviews with learners and staff, the early introduction of learners' questionnaires and better use of initial assessment results to determine appropriate programmes for learners. The self-assessment process is now more thorough. The findings of the self-assessment report matched some of the strengths and weaknesses identified by inspectors.

77. RTA's system for conducting observations of training and other key activities is being implemented slowly. Target dates for completion of the observation of all staff have not been met. The sharing of good practice has also been slow between business administration and engineering.

**Business administration, management & professional****Grade 2**

Programmes inspected	Number of learners	Contributory grade
Employer training pilot	56	2
Apprenticeships for young people	15	2

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

**Strengths**

- good retention and achievement rates for apprenticeship and ETP programmes
- good development of workplace skills
- good support for learners
- good management of the area of learning

**Weaknesses**

- no significant weaknesses identified

**Achievement and standards**

78. Retention and achievement are good on the apprenticeship and ETP programmes, where low retention and slow completion of units were identified as weaknesses at the previous inspection. Effective strategies exist to improve retention rates. Learners at risk of leaving before completing the programme are identified at an early stage and effective steps are taken to retain them. Learners who leave their employment are kept in training.

79. Retention rates are good on the ETP programme, and all learners were retained in 2002-03. Fifteen of 44 learners completed the programme in 2003-04, and 29 learners are still in training. All 26 starters from the 2004-05 intake are still in training. Seventy-one per cent of learners who began the apprenticeship programme in 2003-04 have been retained, 59 per cent have completed their apprenticeship frameworks and three learners are still in training.

80. The standard of learners' portfolios is satisfactory. The evidence is indexed and well organised, with records of assessment by observation, and satisfactory written answers to the knowledge questions. Individual learning plans are up to date and include a record of units completed towards the full qualification.

### Quality of education and training

81. Learners' workplace skills are well developed. Unit achievement targets have been reached successfully. Learners can work for additional qualifications appropriate to their job roles. There are effective resources to help in skills development, particularly in the area of IT. Learners' progress is monitored effectively, and any shortfalls in meeting programme objectives are identified. Meetings between the assessor and the training manager are used to scrutinise individual learners' performances. Detailed action-planning resolves any problems that would jeopardise learners' successful achievement of their qualifications.

82. The skills acquired by learners allow them good opportunities for career progression. Optional units focus on the requirements of the job, and the demands of the job change. Learners confirm increased confidence in their own abilities, and the contribution of key skills training to their effectiveness on the job. Off-the-job training also contributes to the acquisition of skills. Employers recognise that learners have improved their presentation skills and their ability to complete more complex tasks. Learners have progressed to supervisory and managerial positions using the training they have received, and the ability to work in pressurised work situations.

83. Employers and assessors provide good support working as a team to help their learners. Assessors provide good pastoral support when needed. One tutor is a qualified signer, and can give invaluable help to hearing-impaired learners. Employers are involved with their learners' learning programmes and are aware of their progress towards completing their apprenticeship frameworks. Time is allocated for assessor visits. Some time is allocated for portfolio-building when the responsibilities of the job permit this. Communications are good between employers and assessors. Employers appreciate updates on their learners' progress from the assessor and the opportunity to discuss any problems or queries. Employers are involved in the progress review process, although they are not always present throughout the review meetings. Sometimes they give comments after the event. The assessors are sensitive to their learners' needs and flexible during busy work periods, being prepared to reschedule visits to fit in with the needs of the employer. Assessors are easily contactable between visits in case of any queries or problems.

84. All learners receive an initial assessment. Arrangements are satisfactory for learners with additional learning needs, allowing access to additional support for literacy, numeracy or language skills, either from their assessor or from a local college of further education. The standard of assessment is satisfactory. A range of assessment methods is used, including professional discussion.

85. Progress reviews take place every 12 weeks, and include satisfactory action-planning for the next quarter. Learners are on appropriate programmes that meet their current needs. Most of them join as apprentices at level 2 NVQ, but opportunities are available for learners to progress to advanced apprenticeships at level 3 NVQ if their abilities and job roles provide the evidence requirements.

## **Leadership and management**

86. RTA is committed to the continuous professional development of its staff. All staff are well qualified or working towards appropriate qualifications in teaching and adult literacy and numeracy. Additional qualifications are offered to assessors. Induction for new members of staff is effective and the operational management of the area of learning is good. Staff are highly motivated and work effectively as a team. Staff's performances are monitored and staff are supported within a manageable work load. Internal verification is satisfactory. Observation of teaching and learning takes place routinely and includes an established system of moderation. Communications between the staff and local employers are good. Employers speak highly of the service they receive from the provider. RTA has regular meetings and clearly understood procedures. Staff observe each other's working practices and discuss any identified problem areas. They work with the welfare of the learners at the heart of all their activities.