

INSPECTION REPORT

Kwik-Fit (GB) Ltd

29 October 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
- **learndirect** 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

Kwik-Fit (GB) Ltd

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INSPECTION REPORT

DESCRIPTION OF THE PROVIDER

1. Kwik-Fit (GB) Ltd (Kwik-Fit) is a wholly owned subsidiary of Kwik-Fit Holdings plc. Established in 1971, Kwik-Fit was purchased by CVC-Capital Partners in 2002 and is the largest fast-fit organisation in the UK. The company employs in excess of 5,000 people in over 650 fast-fit service centres in England, Scotland and Wales. Following the acquisition by CVC-Capital Partners and a considerable re-structuring, the business now includes fast-fit operations in Northern Ireland, the Netherlands, Belgium, France and Germany, and Kwik-Fit Financial Services, a provider of insurance and financial products from a call centre near Glasgow. The company specialises in the fitting and servicing of a selected range of mechanical and electrical components for motor vehicles including tyres, exhausts, catalytic converters, batteries, brakes, shock absorbers, suspension and lubrication. Kwik-Fit provides its services for seven days a week, 362 days a year. The environment in which it operates requires a combination of retail and motor vehicle skills.
2. Kwik-Fit employs apprentices at fast-fit centres throughout the UK. All potential apprentices are requested to complete a 12-week assessment before entry to the apprenticeship programme. All Kwik-Fit apprentices are employed and are exclusively recruited from 16 to 17 year old school leaver groups. Currently approximately 4.5 per cent of apprentices are women and 12 per cent are from minority ethnic groups. The number of learners entering apprenticeships has increased steadily over the past three years and Kwik-Fit plans to continue growing the numbers over the next five years in light of the skills shortage facing the motor vehicle sector. Currently 36 staff are involved in the delivery of the apprenticeship programme. Kwik-Fit has five dedicated training centres in Edinburgh, Derby, Harlow, Newcastle under Lyme and Reading. The company's headquarters is in Scotland and the apprenticeship programme is administered from Newcastle under Lyme. Kwik-Fit contracts with the National Contracting Service of the Learning and Skills Council (LSC).
3. Kwik-Fit recruits apprentices through a national campaign with learners across most of the UK, including Scotland and Wales. Kwik-Fit has a set entry requirement of two general certificates of secondary education (GCSEs) at grade D or above.

SCOPE OF PROVISION

Engineering, technology & manufacturing

4. There are a total of 472 learners working towards motor vehicle vocational qualifications. Of these, 123 are working towards a motor vehicle foundation modern apprenticeship specialising in fast-fitting. All learners complete in a 12-week assessment period before joining the programme. Currently 90 learners are recruited to this stage. Learners are either referred by Connexions or respond to advertising in the national press. All applicants complete an initial telephone interview. All apprentices attend an initial assessment centre where they complete tests that measure their literacy and

KWIK-FIT (GB) LTD

numeracy skills learning preferences. Aptitude tests in mechanical practice are also included. The apprenticeship is a two-year modular programme with each module lasting 12 to 13 weeks. At the start of initial 12-week assessment period, learners attend a three-day residential induction programme. They receive on-the-job training in service centres and off-the-job training at one of Kwik-Fit's five regional training centres. Kwik-Fit apprentices are all employed.

5. A further 260 adult learners are working towards a national vocational qualification (NVQ) at level 2 in motor vehicle fast-fit as part of a workforce development initiative aimed at employees aged 25 and over. This is closely linked to the company's in-house training and competence assurance framework. Most of these learners have several years' experience in the fast-fit sector and have attended various training courses at one of Kwik-Fit's five regional training centres. Progress reviews are carried out in the workplace every 12 weeks or more frequently to meet the needs of the individual. Qualified assessors visit the workplace for assessment purposes. The NVQ is assessed by matching the company's in-house competence framework to the requirements of the NVQ.

ABOUT THE INSPECTION

Number of inspectors	6
Number of inspection days	27
Number of learner interviews	50
Number of staff interviews	29
Number of employer interviews	14
Number of locations/sites/learning centres visited	29

OVERALL JUDGEMENT

6. The quality of the provision is adequate to meet the reasonable needs of those receiving it. More specifically, Kwik-Fit's leadership and management, quality assurance and approach to equality of opportunity are all good. Training in engineering, technology and manufacturing is also good.

GRADES

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

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

Engineering, technology & manufacturing		2
Contributory areas:	Number of learners	Contributory grade
<i>Motor vehicle/cycle</i>		
- Apprenticeships for adults	260	2
- Work-based learning for young people	123	2

KEY FINDINGS

Achievement and standards

7. Retention and achievement rates are satisfactory and improving. Achievement for foundation modern apprentices has improved from 24 per cent in 1999 to 39 per cent in 2001, with retention for the same period remaining at approximately 44 per cent. For apprentices recruited in 2002, 44 per cent have already achieved. The current retention rate for learners recruited in 2003 is 80 per cent.

8. Retention and achievement rates on the workforce development programme are good, although progress has been slow for some. Of those learners who started in 2002, 69 per cent have already achieved their NVQ.

9. Learners' work is of a good standard. Portfolios are well compiled and presented. Learners demonstrate good occupational skills. There are good progression opportunities for learners and each year the company celebrates apprentices success at an awards ceremony.

Quality of education and training

10. **The development of learners' skills is good.** Good training takes place in the workplace. Trainers are working towards level 2 NVQs, have a good understanding of the requirements of the NVQ, their roles and responsibilities, and have considerable occupational experience.

11. Learners quickly develop good skills in specialist areas and can progress to further modules and develop new skills. Learners can transfer to alternative service centres for additional training and assessment.

12. **Work-based assessment is very effective and comprises a wide range of assessment methods.** Qualified assessors visit the workplace to observe candidates performing practical tasks to demonstrate competency. Written and verbal questioning is used to check learners' knowledge.

13. **Learners' progress is recorded effectively.** There are good paper and information technology (IT) systems to record all assessment decisions and achievements. Learners receive written confirmation of their achievements.

14. Progress reviews are thorough and cover all aspects of the training programme. Learners, employers and assessors are fully involved in the process and all receive a copy of the completed review document. A detailed analysis of learners' understanding of equal opportunities is carried out. Good realistic, achievable and measurable targets are set to assist learners to progress. There is not enough reinforcement of equal opportunities, and health and safety during adult learners' progress reviews.

15. Resources in the workplace are adequate. Staff are experienced practitioners and provide learners with effective training and support. The variety of modern vehicles for learners to work on is not adequate at off-the-job training centres.

16. All learners attend a thorough residential induction to Kwik-Fit. They are fully involved in a wide variety of activities to prepare them for their apprenticeship and for their careers at Kwik-Fit. The induction includes informative sessions on the apprenticeship programme, health and safety, terms and conditions of employment and customer service.

17. **Key skills planning is poor.** Key skills training is mainly carried out during off-the-job training. Learners do not collect evidence from the everyday workplace activities. Key skills are not taught until late in the programme.

18. **Literacy, numeracy and IT support is inadequate.** There is no formal planning of additional support. Initial assessment is carried out, but learners' individual literacy and numeracy needs are not always identified.

Leadership and management

19. **Kwik-Fit commits significant time and resources to developing its workforce.** Within the past two years, a major reorganisation has taken place including roles and responsibilities within the training department.

20. The good in-centre trainer programme is raising the capability of more established staff members.

21. All staff make good use of a comprehensive range of in-house training.

22. **Staff are fully involved in some good partnership activities to raise the profile of careers in the automotive sector and to improve progression.** This includes the development of an NVQ at level 3, changes to the NVQ at level 2 and specific marketing of work in the automotive sector.

23. **There are effective and clear lines for internal communications.** With nationwide coverage, frameworks are in place for staff to meet regularly to discuss their involvement

in delivering the apprenticeship programme. Tutors are allocated responsibility for sharing information on new methods and techniques. Many staff work from home and have been provided with IT systems which gives them good access to central information.

24. Very good use is made of IT to manage the programme. Learners' details are entered onto the system as soon as they express an interest in working for the company. Kwik-Fit analyses recruitment trends and its marketing initiatives. There is a highly effective systems to manage individual training courses, resource allocations and learner participation.

25. Management information reports are used well to allow managers to compare the performance of different assessors and geographic regions and help them to monitor progress in delivery the LSC contract.

26. Trainers are satisfactorily qualified and experienced with many having been promoted from within the company. Although many do not have formal teaching qualifications, the company is currently planning a NVQ at level 3 in learning and development for all trainers.

27. Resources are managed satisfactorily. Most training centres provide a sufficient range of appropriate equipment. The company analyses trends within service centres and uses this information to ensure that training resources reflect most of the learners' work activities.

28. The strategy to support learners with additional learning needs is inadequate. Learners do not receive adequate literacy and numeracy support. There are no formal arrangements to refer learners to an adequate support service.

29. Selection and recruitment arrangements are good. All initial applications are made through a telephone helpline where a scoring system is used to assess a range of criteria. Further screening is used to identify those applicants suitable for an assessment centre. Only the applicant's postcode and initial application score is used in this process.

30. There is good reinforcement of learners' understanding of equal opportunities during progress reviews and when they attend training modules. The quality assurance framework includes follow-up telephone questionnaires to check learners' recall of equal opportunities issues after induction and at other points in the programme.

31. There are some good initiatives to widen participation. These include marketing materials aimed at women and the targeting of advertisements in magazines read by female school leavers. The number of women apprentices has increased from 2.4 per cent in 2003 to 4.5 per cent in 2004.

32. There is insufficient analysis of information collected on learners' gender, ethnicity and disability so that the performance of different groups can be established. Recruitment trends have been analysed, but these focus only on the number of women

who take up training.

33. The quality assurance arrangements are highly effective. Trainers, assessors, internal verifiers and managers are fully committed and involved in the continuous improvement of the provision. Staff are provided with a well-prepared document detailing clear performance objectives. They share responsibilities for collecting information, evaluation, identification of strengths and weaknesses, and the development and implementation of action plans.

34. There is good use of internal verification to improve assessment practice. Clear development of the internal verification process has taken place. The documents to record judgements and the development needs of assessors' performance are much improved, and internal verifiers are sufficiently critical in their judgements.

35. The self-assessment report is satisfactory and includes the views of learners and staff. The circulation of the finished report is to only a few members of staff. However, managers use it to identify clear targets and activities to develop and improve the provision.

36. There is insufficient formal quality assurance of work-based learning. No formal observation and evaluation of on-the-job training takes place. There are detailed and thorough arrangements to quality assure off-the-job training places in regional centres. However, systematic observation of training and formal evaluation does not take place.

Leadership and management

Strengths

- strong company strategy to develop the workforce
- good partnership activities within the automotive sector
- effective internal communications
- very good use of IT for programme management
- good selection and recruitment practices
- good reinforcement of equal opportunities
- many good initiatives to widen participation
- highly effective quality assurance arrangements
- good use of internal verification to improve assessment practice

Weaknesses

- inadequate strategy to support learners with additional needs
- insufficient analysis of equal opportunities data
- insufficient formal quality assurance of work-based learning

Engineering, technology & manufacturing

Motor vehicle/cycle

Strengths

- good skills development
- very effective work-based assessment
- very effective recording of learners' progress
- thorough progress reviews

Weaknesses

- poor planning for key skills
- inadequate support for learners with additional learning needs

WHAT LEARNERS LIKE ABOUT KWIK-FIT (GB) LTD:

- the good support and guidance provided by staff
- being able to gain practical experience and qualifications
- the off-the-job training
- being paid for learning
- working near to their home
- the opportunities for progression within the company
- the opportunity for adults to gain a recognised national qualification
- the recognition and reward for success
- the relaxed approach to training
- the good teamwork

WHAT LEARNERS THINK KWIK-FIT (GB) LTD COULD IMPROVE:

- the travel arrangements to regional centres for training
- the on-the-job training at busy depots
- the flexibility of the working week
- the terminology used in NVQ workbooks
- the online testing questions used for key skills examinations

KEY CHALLENGES FOR KWIK-FIT (GB) LTD:

- continue to improve retention and achievement rates
- improve arrangements for supporting learners with additional learning needs
- improve the training and assessment for key skills
- more analysis of equal opportunities data
- implement quality assurance for in-centre training

DETAILED INSPECTION FINDINGS

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

Grade 2

Strengths

- strong company strategy to develop the workforce
- good partnership activities within the automotive sector
- effective internal communications
- very good use of IT for programme management
- good selection and recruitment practices
- good reinforcement of equal opportunities
- many good initiatives to widen participation
- highly effective quality assurance arrangements
- good use of internal verification to improve assessment practice

Weaknesses

- inadequate strategy to support learners with additional needs
- insufficient analysis of equal opportunities data
- insufficient formal quality assurance of work-based learning

37. Kwik-Fit commits significant time and resources to developing its workforce. Faced with high levels of staff turnover and recruitment difficulties, the company has introduced a range of strategic initiatives. This started with a comprehensive review of staff terms and conditions. Within the past two years, roles and responsibilities for training and assessment have been reassessed. Regional managers assess the number of new learners required each year and recruitment has steadily increased to its present level. During their first year of training, the employment costs of learners is met through the training budget rather than individual service centres. The innovative in-centre trainer programme is aimed at raising the capability of more-established fitters and supervisors. This is available in each depot to support the development of staff and, in particular, learners. The Kwik-Fit competence-based assessment framework is cross-referenced to the NVQ at level 2 in order that LSC-funded adult learners efficiently gain their qualification. This is linked to a new competence and capability framework that has introduced appraisal to staff at all levels.

38. Trainers and assessors are fully involved in some good partnership activities to raise the profile of careers in the automotive sector and to improve progression. At present, no NVQ at level 3 is available for staff working in fast-fit centres and Kwik-Fit has worked closely with the relevant sector skills council to develop this. In addition, Kwik-Fit is working with the same sector skills council to ensure that the content of the NVQ at level 2 meets the particular needs of the fast-fit sector. Specific marketing of work with motor vehicles is highlighted through partnership activities with local education and business

partnerships, and through the advice and guidance service for young people. Other partnership activity with the Institute of the Motor Industry (IMI) is helping to raise the profile of work in the sector. This includes plans to give IMI accreditation from Kwik-Fit's in-house training programmes and work on a licensing scheme for fast-fit fitters.

39. There are effective and clear lines for internal communications. With nationwide coverage, frameworks are in place for staff to meet regularly to discuss their involvement in delivering and improving the apprenticeship programme. Different tutors are allocated responsibility for sharing information as new products and techniques are developed. When a new training course is prepared, tutors are required to observe the course twice to build their own knowledge of the subject and understand how training will be delivered to ensure consistency. Many staff work from home and have been provided with computers to give them good access to central information. Good use is made of e-mail to share information. Staff at all levels have appropriate understanding of the apprenticeship programme and how they can contribute to its success. Remotely based assessors have a clear understanding of targets and performance.

40. Very good use is made of IT to manage the programme. Learners' details are entered onto the system as soon as they express an interest in working for the company. Kwik-Fit analyses recruitment trends and the success of marketing initiatives. Clerical processes, such as invitations to training courses and hotel bookings, are automated. Working closely with the software provider, Kwik-Fit has developed systems to manage individual training courses, resource allocations and to monitor learner participation. The system allows assessors to enter achievement information remotely which give senior managers real-time information on learners' rate of achievement. Management information reports allow managers to compare the performance of different assessors and geographic regions and helps them to monitor progress in delivery of the LSC contract. All staff have an adequate working knowledge of the management information system. The management information system is constantly evolving as the company develops a wider range of data and reports.

41. Resources are managed satisfactorily. Most training centres provide a sufficient range of appropriate equipment. The company analyses trends within service centres and uses this information to ensure that training resources reflect most work activities that learners face on a daily basis. Equipment is maintained to a high standard and health and safety practices are promoted well. Fleet cars, which are due to be replaced, are given to training centres so that learners can work on them. However, learners do not have adequate access to a wider range of car makes.

42. Senior managers prepare a quarterly training request for each region. All staff make good use of comprehensive range of in-house training. Trainers and learners are encouraged to become members of a professional institution and Kwik-Fit helps with the initial cost. The company is involved with a pilot programme to introduce e-learning into service centres. Trainers are satisfactorily qualified and experienced: many having been promoted from within the company. Although many do not have formal teaching qualifications, the company is currently planning an NVQ at level 3 in learning and development for all trainers. Progression routes are good for learners. Incentives are

used to motivate apprentices and include payment for a toolkit and a driving test after they successfully complete their apprenticeship. Each year, the company celebrates learners' success at an awards ceremony held at a well-known national theme park. NVQ, technical and apprenticeship certificates are framed and presented by the company chairman. Kwik-Fit is achieving high levels of retention and achievement from staff at all levels.

43. The strategy to support learners with additional learning needs is inadequate. For learners who want to join the Kwik-Fit training programme, selection arrangements are carefully designed to identify those with a particular learning need. However, some learners require much higher levels of additional support in relation to literacy, numeracy and IT skills. Many receive inappropriate support. Kwik-Fit has no formal arrangements to refer learners to an adequate support service to fully meet their particular training needs.

Equality of opportunity

Contributory grade 2

44. Selection and recruitment arrangements are good. The number of applicants far exceeds the number of places available and in some parts of the country Kwik-Fit has to apply very careful selection criteria. All initial applications are made through a telephone helpline where a scoring system is used to assess against a range of criteria. Further screening by a designated member of staff is used to identify those applicants suitable for an assessment centre. Only the applicant's postcode and initial application score is used in this process. At the assessment centre, potential learners complete an aptitude test, a test of their ability to learn, a basic skills test and an interview. All assessment centre results are considered by a panel before a final recommendation is made. For unsuccessful applicants, alternative career options are discussed. Throughout the process, very good efforts are made to ensure fair and objective treatment of applicants.

45. There is good reinforcement of learners' understanding of equal opportunities during progress reviews and when learners attend training modules. At each training module, assessment paperwork reminds learners of the Kwik-Fit appeals procedure and routinely assesses aspects of equal opportunities. For example, on a training module that takes place 10 weeks into the apprenticeship programme, there are assessments designed to challenge gender stereotyping and check learners' understanding of sex discrimination and equal pay legislation. The quality assurance framework includes follow-up telephone questionnaires to check learners' understanding of equal opportunities issues after induction and at other points in the programme. Different aspects are graded, a summary report is produced and managers use this as part of the action-planning process.

46. Kwik-Fit is involved in some good initiatives to widen participation. These include marketing materials aimed at women and the targeting of advertisements in magazines read by female school leavers. Working with local education and business partnerships, a skills challenge targets year-10 pupils close to Kwik-Fit's training centres in Derby and Reading. Approximately half of participants were women. Evaluation of the impact of this initiative has not been conclusive but indicates that many young women may consider work with motor vehicles as a possible career option. A CD-ROM is circulated

to advice and guidance agencies to show the work of a woman apprentice. There is good promotion of equal opportunities on marketing materials. Enquiries from women increased from 0.6 per cent in 2002 to 2.45 per cent in 2004. The number of women apprentices has increased from 2.4 per cent in 2003 to 4.5 per cent in 2004.

47. Learners attend a group induction to their training programme. Equal opportunities issues are covered well through a session on terms and conditions linked to an employee handbook. This includes codes of conduct, disciplinary procedures, employment legislation and anti-discrimination laws. Specific guidance is provided on race equality, disability rights, race relations, equal pay, sex discrimination and disability. Most learners have a satisfactory recall of their induction and understanding of the range of equal opportunities matters that apply to them.

48. The human resources section of Kwik-Fit has developed an appropriate range of detailed equal opportunities policies and procedures that meet legislative requirements. These are regularly reviewed through the company's central quality assurance systems. Responsibilities for implementing and monitoring policies are clearly defined. The language used in policies and procedures is carefully prepared, with useful examples of direct and indirect discrimination, and a clear explanation of harassment and bullying. Policies and procedures have been designed for use across the whole organisation with no references to the particular needs of learners. All learners receive a welcome pack when they join Kwik-Fit which reinforces and details equal opportunities policies and procedures. The company gives learners the same access to support services as it does all staff. This includes access to an employee support helpline and details of other support agencies for drug and alcohol misuse.

49. The company has introduced an initiative to raise staff capability against a number of criteria including respect for others. Staff self-assess their own approach to respecting others before an appraisal meeting with their manager during which development needs are identified. Some staff have received disability awareness training so that they are better placed to deal with customers with disabilities. During induction, the company places strong emphasis in reinforcing its values and beliefs on respect for all. Regional human resource managers are in contact with learners in addition to those staff they meet regularly. In event of a grievance or complaint, these managers carry out independent activities to resolve difficulties. Where appropriate, learners' parents are involved in resolving difficulties.

50. Kwik-Fit collects information on learners' gender, ethnicity and disability when they join the programme. However, there is insufficient analysis to assess the performance of different groups. Recruitment trends have been analysed, but these focus only on the number of women who take up training. There is no sophisticated analysis of the achievement of learners in relation to equality and diversity measures. While the ethnicity of learners and staff is largely representative of the community they serve, there has been no detailed analysis and targeting to ensure that barriers to participation are being tackled. While many learners have not disclosed a disability, most Kwik-Fit premises and learning centres are accessible for those with restricted mobility.

Quality assurance

Contributory grade 2

51. Quality assurance arrangements are highly effective. Trainers, assessors, internal verifiers and managers are fully committed and involved in the continuous improvement of the provision. A quality monitoring calendar clearly details when activities should take place. For example, procedures to observe teaching and learning, file audits, interviews with learners, surveys of staff and analysis of management information take place throughout the year. Staff are provided with a well-prepared document detailing clear performance objectives and how they will be used to quality assure the range of key training activities. They share responsibilities for collecting information, evaluation, identification of strengths and weaknesses, and the development and implementation of action plans. Managers are provided with a continuous improvement framework through effective action to rectify weaknesses and further identification and action-planning to deal with other issues. Recent improvements have been made through this process in assessment practices, the recording of learners' progress and progress reviews.

52. Directors approve the quality assurance framework and set clear targets at strategic level in the business plan, and at operational level for managers and staff. Managers have identified the need to move away from a compliance-based system to one that quality assures the key training processes. Kwik-Fit has an overall quality assurance framework and a clearly written manual of policies and procedures. Quality assurance is regarded as a continually evolving process and features as a set agenda item at all team meetings. Staff are fully involved in the assessment of the provision and activities. They are fully committed to ensuring that changes take place and the learners' experience is improved.

53. Maintaining quality control throughout the 650 branches and 5,000 employees is satisfactory. The processing of training, assessment and quality assurance through a single centre provides management control over a wide range of information. For example, training documents held centrally. This ensures off-the-job trainers are confident they are using up-to-date and accurate information in carrying out training activities throughout the five regional centres. Many of the surveys and questionnaires have been standardised to ensure that assessment of information is consistent.

54. There is good use of internal verification to improve assessment practice. Clear development of the internal verification process has taken place. The paperwork to record judgements and development needs of assessors' performance is much improved and internal verifiers are sufficiently critical in their judgements. Internal verifiers set clear and measurable targets for assessors during the observation of their activities. All assessors receive detailed feedback on their performance and actions to improve it. Those awarded the highest grades receive a critical assessment of their performance and clear targets for improvement. Assessors provide effective regular and ongoing work-based assessment of learners' competence.

55. The self-assessment report is satisfactory and includes the views of learners and staff. Although circulation of the finished report is to only a few members of staff, managers use it to identify clear targets and activities to develop and improve the provision. For example, the report identified that the quality assurance arrangements were incomplete. The development of a new quality assurance manual, policies, procedures and an action

plan have provided staff with effective arrangements to use in the continual improvement of the provision. Inspectors agreed with many of the strengths and weaknesses identified in the self-assessment report. Good progress made in introducing new systems and processes has dealt with many of the weaknesses. Except that for equal opportunities, inspectors awarded higher grades than those given in the self-assessment report.

56. There is insufficient formal quality assurance of work-based learning. As part of a workforce development initiative, 260 adult learners are working towards NVQs in vehicle fitting at level 2. Of these, 150 have successfully completed this qualification and their role is to provide training, support and guidance to learners. However, no formal observation and evaluation of on-the-job training of learners takes place. Kwik-Fit has detailed and thorough arrangements to quality assure off-the-job training in the regional centres. This does not extend to learners' activity in the workplace. Systematic observation of training and formal evaluation does not take place. However, managers are aware of some of the issues through feedback obtained through staff and learners' surveys.

AREAS OF LEARNING

Engineering, technology & manufacturing

Engineering, technology & manufacturing		2
Contributory areas:	Number of learners	Contributory grade
<i>Motor vehicle/cycle</i>		
- Apprenticeships for adults	260	2
- Work-based learning for young people	123	2

Motor vehicle/cycle

Strengths

- good skills development
- very effective work-based assessment
- very effective recording of learners' progress
- thorough progress reviews

Weaknesses

- poor planning for key skills
- inadequate support for learners with additional learning needs

Achievement and standards

57. Retention and achievement rates are satisfactory. Achievement rates for foundation modern apprentices have improved from 24 per cent in 1999 to 39 per cent in 2001. Retention rates for the same period have remained generally constant at 44 per cent. Measures have been introduced to raise retention and achievement rates. For learners recruited in 2002, 44 per cent have already completed their framework or NVQ. For learners recruited in 2003, the retention rate is 80 per cent.

58. The workforce development programme for adult learners was introduced in 2002. At approximately 90 per cent in 2002 and 2003, the retention rate is good. To date, 69 per cent of learners starting in 2002 and 29 per cent of learners starting in 2003 have achieved their NVQ. All learners who have not yet achieved it, remain on the programme. Overall retention and achievement rates on this programme are satisfactory, although progress has been slow for some learners.

59. Learners' work is of a good standard. Portfolios are well compiled and presented. Assessment evidence consists mainly of customer job sheets and invoices to support the tasks carried out. Kwik-Fit has identified the need for improved retention and achievement rates and has developed action plans for this purpose.

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

LSC funded work-based learning																
Apprenticeships																
	2003-04		2002-03		2001-02		2000-01		1999-2000							
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Number of starts	123		97		101		91		51							
Retained*	0		43	44	41	41	41	45	31	61						
Successfully completed	0		43	44	39	39	39	43	12	24						
Still in learning	99		24	25	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																
Apprenticeships for adults																
	2004-05		2003-04		2002-03											
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Number of starts	19		372		59											
Retained*	0		144	39	46	78										
Successfully completed	0		109	29	41	69										
Still in learning	19		228	61	13	22										

*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

60. Skills development is good. Good training takes place in the workplace, which is supported very effectively by specially trained Kwik-Fit trainers. All trainers have been or are undergoing training to level 2 NVQ through the workforce development programme for adult learners. They have a good understanding of the requirements of the NVQ and their roles and responsibilities towards training. Most trainers have many years' experience in the automotive industry and share their knowledge and experience with learners. Learners very quickly develop good skills in specialist areas. Once these skills have been acquired learners can progress to further modules and develop new skills. Provision is made for learners to transfer to alternative service centres when training and assessment tasks cannot be accessed in their normal place of work. Every effort is made to enable learners to experience the full range of training and to develop all the required skills for the achievement of their intended goal.

61. Work-based assessment is very effective and comprises a good range of assessment methods. Qualified assessors visit the workplace to observe candidates performing practical tasks to demonstrate competency. Written and verbal questioning also checks learners' knowledge. Assessors demonstrated good assessment techniques and practices. All assessments are planned before the visit. Managers and learners are well

informed. Suitable customer vehicles with the relevant repair requirements are arranged. Customers are fully informed and their permission is gained for a learner to work on their vehicle for assessment purposes. All assessment decisions are recorded well and good feedback is given to the learner. Action plans are derived from the assessment and these are shared with the learner and manager. Good use is made of witness testimony to assess learners' competence. Trainers have been trained in work-based assessment and recording and effectively observe and record learners' competency. The qualified assessor then assesses these decisions.

62. Learners' progress is recorded effectively. There are good paper and IT systems to record all assessment decisions and achievements. Learners receive written confirmation of their achievements to date and can, with the assessors, access detailed data on their achievements. Learners, managers and assessors can identify at any time what has been achieved and what needs to be achieved to enable the learner to progress. Achievement data is automatically linked into central records at the central training centre and is used for predicting trends, target-setting and continuous improvement.

63. Learners' progress reviews are thorough. Reviews cover all aspects of the training programme. Learners, employers and assessors are all involved and all receive a copy of the completed review document. The contractual obligation is to carry out progress reviews every 12 weeks. However, the needs of the individual learner are taken into account and reviews are carried out more frequently, in some cases every six to eight weeks. More informal visits are made to the workplace by assessors to give support to learners. There is a high regard to health and safety issues and a detailed analysis of learners' understanding is carried out. Equality of opportunity is reinforced effectively at reviews with specific topics discussed. Learners have a good understanding of equal opportunities issues and a good recollection of induction training on this topic. Good realistic, achievable and measurable targets are set to help learners to progress. These targets are shared with managers who can then organise training to assist progress. Effective action plans are developed to assist in the planning of future training and in learners' progress. All learners have the telephone number of their assessor and are actively encouraged to contact them for additional support or assistance. Learners are confident to contact assessors and value the level of support they receive. Progress reviews were identified as a weakness in the self-assessment report. Much good work has been carried out and progress reviews are now effective, thorough and highly consistent throughout the training regions.

64. All learners attend planned off-the-job training at five regional training centres. Further specialist skills are developed in these centres and learners can then practise these skills and enhance their technical expertise on return to the workplace. Trainers and tutors at the training centres have good relevant experience in training and the automotive industry. Theory and practical session are linked together well and current industrial standards and practices are used to enhance learners' knowledge and skills.

65. All learners attend a thorough three-day residential induction to Kwik-Fit. They are fully involved in a wide variety of integrated activities designed to prepare them for their apprenticeship and for their careers at Kwik-Fit. The induction includes informative

sessions on the modern apprenticeship programme, health and safety, terms and conditions of employment and customer service. All learners participate in an equal opportunities session where they are encouraged to respond to a number of short video clips designed to highlight equal opportunities issues. There is some induction for adult learners that provides a familiarisation of the programme but with insufficient ongoing reinforcement of health and safety and equal opportunities through progress reviews.

66. On- and off-the-job resources are satisfactory. Resources in the workplace are adequate for learners to carry out tasks for training purposes and to prove their competency. Staff are experienced practitioners and provide training and assistance to learners effectively. Off-the-job training centres are satisfactory resourced. However, learners do not have access to an adequate range of modern vehicles. The range of vehicles encountered in the workplace compensates for this. Many staff in the regional training centres do not have formal training qualifications, but most have good and varied technical experience. Off-the-job trainers thoroughly check that learners are using the correct personal protective equipment required in the workshop. There is insufficient initial assessment for adult learners and no identification of learners who require literacy and numeracy support.

67. Planning of key skills training and assessment is poor. Key skills training is mainly carried out during off-the-job training periods. Assignments are set for learners to complete. Some are integrated with motor vehicle studies and others are not. Learners do not collect evidence from their workplace activities. Many learners have gained qualifications that exempt them from aspects of key skills assessment. These are not routinely checked or applied. In some cases learners have been entered for external tests when they qualified for exemption. Key skills are not taught until late in the programme. The provider has identified this weakness and it was identified in the self-assessment report. Actions have been taken to improve the process but it is too soon to judge its effectiveness.

68. There is inadequate literacy, numeracy and IT support for learners with identified learning needs. There is no formal planning of additional support. Initial assessment is carried out but individual literacy and numeracy needs of learners is not always identified. Those learners identified are offered the use of specialist textbooks for private study learning. One learner who had identified weaknesses in IT skills was told to produce a database and spreadsheet on the weekly position of the local football team. This was expected to be carried out without additional instruction. Individual learning plans are not regularly updated and there is no reference to the provision of additional support.

Leadership and management

69. Management of training at local service centres is good. Good working relationships exist between assessors and service centre managers. Communications are good and assessors visit frequently to suit the needs of the individual. Assessors benefit from good internal verification arrangements. There is a high level of consistency of management across all regional service centres and area training centres. There is high regard paid to

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health and safety, and equality of opportunity issues. There are no formal arrangements in place to observe on-the-job training.