

# INSPECTION REPORT

## **Herefordshire Group Training Association Limited**

**28 April 2005**



ADULT LEARNING  
INSPECTORATE

## **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 aged 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.

### **Pre-inspection analysis**

The resources allocated to a cycle 2 inspection are primarily determined by the findings from the previous inspection. Account is also taken of information about achievement and retention obtained from the funding body, and any significant changes in the size or scope of the provision.

Where a provider has received good grades in cycle 1, the cycle 2 inspection is relatively light. If the provider offers a number of areas of learning, a restricted sample is inspected.

Where a provider has received satisfactory grades in cycle 1, the cycle 2 inspection is less intensive and it is possible that not all areas of learning are included.

Where there are significant unsatisfactory grades from cycle 1, the intensity of the cycle 2 inspection is broadly the same as cycle 1, and all significant areas of learning are inspected.

Providers that have not previously been inspected will receive a full inspection.

## Overall effectiveness

The grades given for areas of learning and leadership and management will be used to arrive at a judgement about the overall effectiveness of the provider.

An **outstanding** provider should typically have leadership and management and at least half of the areas of learning judged to be a grade 1. All area of learning grades will be graded 1 or 2.

A **good** provider should have leadership and management and at least half of the area of learning grades judged to be a grade 2 or better. A good training provider should not have any grade 4s, and few grade 3s in the areas of learning.

A **satisfactory** provider should have adequate or better grades in leadership and management and in at least two thirds of the area of learning grades. An adequate provider might have a range of grades across areas of learning, some of which might be graded 4.

Provision will normally be deemed to be **inadequate** where more than one third of the area of learning grades and/or leadership and management are judged to be inadequate.

The final decision as to whether the provision is inadequate rests with the Chief Inspector of Adult Learning.

## Grading

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

- *grade 1 - outstanding*
- *grade 2 - good*
- *grade 3 - satisfactory*
- *grade 4 - inadequate*

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### Contents

#### Summary

Description of the provider	1
Overall effectiveness	1
Key challenges for Herefordshire Group Training Association Limited	2
Grades	3
About the inspection	3
Key Findings	3
What learners like about Herefordshire Group Training Association Limited	11
What learners think Herefordshire Group Training Association Limited could improve	11

#### Detailed inspection findings

Leadership and management	12
Equality of opportunity	13
Quality improvement	14
Engineering, technology & manufacturing	16
Business administration, management & professional	21
Retailing, customer service & transportation	25

## INSPECTION REPORT

### DESCRIPTION OF THE PROVIDER

1. Herefordshire Group Training Association Limited (HGTA) is a private company and a registered charity. The company operates from premises in Hereford and Worcester. It provides training for apprentices and advanced apprentices in areas of engineering, business administration and retailing and customer service.
2. HGTA was founded in 1967. In October 1999, it acquired Midshire Training Services. HGTA's member companies range from small businesses to large employers in the manufacturing and processing sector in Herefordshire and Worcestershire. HGTA recruits staff and provides training for its member companies. It also trains staff from a local council and from retail, accountancy and legal services companies. The company currently has 366 learners on apprenticeships, advanced apprenticeships and national vocational qualifications (NVQs) programmes. Its premises in Hereford consist of offices and a training centre. HGTA has established an additional training centre and offices in Worcester. It has Centre of Vocational Excellence (CoVE) status for its engineering provision.
3. HGTA's work-based learning programmes for young people are funded by Herefordshire and Worcestershire Learning and Skills Council.

### OVERALL EFFECTIVENESS

**Grade 2**

4. **The overall effectiveness of the provision is good.** HGTA's leadership and management are good as are its arrangements for quality improvement. Its approach to equality of opportunity is satisfactory. Training is good in engineering, technology and manufacturing, business administration, management and professional, and retailing, customer service and transportation.
5. **The inspection team were broadly confident in the reliability of the self-assessment process.** The self-assessment process is satisfactory. Self-assessment is conducted annually. It is an inclusive process with the views of learners, staff, employers and partners treated as key inputs. The latest self-assessment report is accurate and self-critical in the strengths, weaknesses and key challenges that it identifies. However, the report does not sufficiently justify the strengths and weaknesses and is insufficiently judgemental.
6. **The provider has demonstrated that it is in a good position to make improvements.** HGTA has dealt effectively with most of the weaknesses identified at the previous inspection. It systematically analyses information from regular quarterly quality reviews, learner surveys, employer and staff feedback, and other relevant surveys to identify trends and causes for concern, and to plan improvements.

## KEY CHALLENGES FOR HEREFORDSHIRE GROUP TRAINING ASSOCIATION LIMITED:

- increase involvement of workplace supervisors in managing training to meet learners' needs
- improve framework completion rates
- increase the focus on literacy, numeracy and language skills support for learners
- improve the promotion of equality of opportunity and diversity in the workplace
- use CoVE status to promote effectively the participation of under-represented groups in engineering

## GRADES

grade 1 = outstanding, grade 2 = good, grade 3 = satisfactory, grade 4 = inadequate

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

Engineering, technology & manufacturing			2
Contributory areas:	Number of learners	Contributory grade	
<b>Mechanical engineering</b>			
Apprenticeships for young people	188	2	
NVQ training for young people	5	2	
<b>Electrical engineering</b>			
Apprenticeships for young people	35	2	

Business administration, management & professional			2
Contributory areas:	Number of learners	Contributory grade	
<b>Business administration</b>			
Apprenticeships for young people	78	2	
<b>Accounting and economics</b>			
Apprenticeships for young people	11	2	
NVQ training for young people	13	2	

Retailing, customer service & transportation		2
Contributory areas:	Number of learners	Contributory grade
<b>Retailing</b> Apprenticeships for young people	7	2
<b>Customer service</b> Apprenticeships for young people	22	2
<b>Warehousing and distribution</b> Apprenticeships for young people	7	2

## ABOUT THE INSPECTION

7. The inspection reported on and graded HGTA's provision in engineering, manufacturing and technology, business administration, management and professional and retailing, customer service and transportation. There were too few learners in construction to report on and grade this area of learning.

Number of inspectors	5
Number of inspection days	14
Number of learners interviewed	44
Number of staff interviewed	28
Number of employers interviewed	10
Number of locations/sites/learning centres visited	2
Number of partners/external agencies interviewed	2
Number of visits	15

## KEY FINDINGS

### Achievements and standards

#### 8. Retention rates for advanced apprentices in engineering are good and improving.

The retention rate for those starting between 1998-99 and 2003-04 is 71 per cent. All the learners starting in 2004-05 are still on programme.

9. Advanced apprentices in engineering demonstrate good levels of skills and knowledge in the final stage of their programme and have a good understanding of the content of their apprenticeship frameworks. They produce good portfolios of evidence towards their level 3 NVQ. Many portfolios contain high-quality evidence of complex and challenging work carried out by learners in the workplace.

10. Framework completion rates for engineering advanced apprentices are satisfactory and improving.

**11. Retention rates for learners on business administration apprenticeships are good and improving.** Eighty per cent of advanced apprentices and 86 per cent of apprentices who started their programmes in the past two years are still in learning or have completed their framework.

**12. Achievement and retention rates for learners on business administration NVQs are good.** Of the 34 learners starting NVQ programmes between 2000-01 and 2003-04, 85 per cent were retained and 75 per cent achieved their qualification. All 12 learners starting NVQs in 2004-05 are still in learning.

13. Business administration learners are developing good practical administration skills in the workplace. Their portfolios are organised and presented well. Learners collect a comprehensive range of NVQ evidence, which includes witness statements, observations, reports, photographs and hard copy documents. Many learners have additional responsibilities delegated to them by their employers.

**14. The progress made by retailing learners towards completion of their programmes and in their employment is now good,** having improved since the previous inspection.

15. Retailing learners have good progression opportunities, with many advancing from level 2 to level 3 qualifications. Many learners progress well in employment and have been promoted to supervisory posts, several with responsibility for supporting and mentoring new learners from HGTA.

16. Retention rates for retailing apprentices are satisfactory except for the 2003-04 intake, the retention rate for which is low. The retention rate declined from 89 per cent in 2002-03 to 48 per cent in 2003-04, when a group of learners from one employer left the scheme early. Eighty per cent of the apprentices recruited during 2004-05 are still in learning.

**17. Retention and achievement rates are low for engineering apprentices.** Thirty-three apprentices started with HGTA in the period 1999 and 2002 and only four have completed the framework, with another three still in learning. All 14 apprentices starting in 2004-05 are still in learning. Ten per cent of the total learners in engineering are apprentices.

18. Learners have access to a range of additional qualifications including first aid at work, and health and safety. Learners also have the opportunity of attending an outdoor residential team-building course that is used to generate evidence towards key skills.

### **The quality of provision**

**19. The engineering training is well managed and highly effective in meeting the needs of first-year apprentices.** Staff successfully raise learners' employability skills, paying particular attention to timekeeping, discipline and respect for others. Employers consider that the first-year training prepares the learners particularly well for work. Good standards of health and safety are strongly emphasised during all training activities.

**20. The first-year engineering training centres for apprentices, at Hereford and Worcester, have a wide variety of good resources** that have recently benefited from the additional funding available through CoVE status. The new Worcester centre has been



equipped with a good range of new and refurbished machine tools to meet the needs of first-year apprentices in fitting, machining, welding and fabrication. The resources at the Hereford site satisfy fully the requirements for basic training at level 2 and have good modern additional training facilities in a wide range of engineering disciplines.

21. The ratio of one trainer/assessor to every six engineering apprentices is good, and learners can obtain guidance whenever they require it. Engineering training staff have extensive occupational experience and are qualified in training and assessment.

22. **HGTA provides a good recruitment service for engineering learners.** The service is time efficient and provides learners with good guidance on the opportunities for careers in engineering. HGTA uses its strong links with engineering companies to identify apprenticeship vacancies and to promote candidates. The recruitment service is highly valued by employers. HGTA's promotion of work-based learning to Connexions and schools is good and improving and, together with the many personal recommendations it receives, maintains a good level of applications for engineering apprenticeships.

23. **Learners in engineering experience a wide range of learning opportunities in their work placements.** Employers provide learners in the second and third year of advanced apprenticeships with a further broad base of experience through planned programmes of on-the-job training in different company departments. When their final placement is identified learners are given extensive opportunities to learn and practise their skills. Learners are trained by experienced specialist staff in their workplace and are often given additional specialist training, which is specific to requirements of their employer. For example, some learners employed in the maintenance of food and beverage manufacturing and processing plant have been trained in food hygiene, and others in advanced computer numerical control (CNC) techniques for machine tool production.

24. **Business administration learners benefit from good work placements.** Supervisors give learners good support and opportunities to develop their skills and complete their programmes. A number of employers provide learners with flexible arrangements that allow them time to work on their portfolios during the day. In one company, a learner is given weekly study leave. Many employers have a good understanding of NVQ requirements and are closely involved in their learners' progress. Good links exist between assessors and employers.

25. **Teaching and learning are very good in business administration.** Learning sessions are well planned with clear purposeful structures and activities. Learners are kept challenged with a variety of activities that promote good levels of interest and motivation. Learners make effective use of the materials and worksheets from sessions to develop evidence for NVQ units.

26. **The two-week induction programme for business administration learners is outstanding.** Learners are given an excellent introduction to their responsibilities and rights in the workplace and those of their workplace supervisors. Learners' team working, communication and presentation skills are developed well through a series of innovative games and activities. Effective personal support is available to help learners complete their programme, including specialist support services such as counselling. There is comprehensive coverage of equality of opportunity in the workplace. The final day of induction is used very effectively with workplace supervisors attending presentations by

learners on all elements of the induction programme.

27. **Progress reviews for retailing learners are very effective**, with good short-term target-setting giving learners a clear understanding on what they need to do. Learners speak positively of the benefits arising from reviews. Employers are actively involved in the review process and provide good support to learners.

28. **The portfolios of learners on retailing, customer service and warehousing courses contain a good range of evidence.** Assessors make good use of workplace assessments. They encourage learners to make good use of digital photography to produce a wide variety of interesting portfolio evidence. Learners take a pride in their portfolios, which contain much good work, and speak positively of the support they receive from their assessors.

29. HGTA's development and assessment of key skills for engineering learners is satisfactory, with many learners receiving good individual remedial support. Key skills support sessions for third- and fourth-year learners are available at the training centres. A key skills specialist works with training centre trainers and learners in identifying development and assessment opportunities for key skills qualifications in numeracy, communications and information technology (IT).

30. Business administration learners are adequately screened for their literacy and numeracy skills support needs at the start of their programme, and are informed of their results. HGTA makes support readily available for learners with identified needs, although no learner on programme is currently receiving support for literacy or numeracy.

31. Initial assessment arrangements for learners in retailing, customer services and warehousing are satisfactory. No formal arrangements exist for identifying learners with additional literacy and numeracy skills support needs. However, if a learner does require additional support then appropriate assistance is provided quickly.

32. The progress review process for engineering learners is satisfactory. HGTA's assessors conduct workplace reviews with learners every four weeks. Learners feel well supported and guided by the process. However, some target-setting is not adequately specific and not always monitored effectively. Most progress reviews are conducted between the learner and the assessor, with the workplace supervisors being subsequently informed of the results. The involvement of supervisors in progress reviews differs markedly across placements. At best, supervisors are actively involved in planning the workplace training arrangements, but in some companies the workplace supervisor has inadequate involvement.

33. **The assessment of engineering advanced apprentices at level 3 in the workplace is delayed until late in their apprenticeship**, and insufficient use is made of formative assessment during the early and interim stages of level 3 work. Learners produce written reports on their work in the second and third year but these are examined and not assessed during the monthly reviews. Some of this evidence is not adequately evaluated by a workplace specialist and often is only endorsed by a supervisor. It is not until the fourth year that assessors carry out a full and final assessment of the whole portfolio of evidence.

34. **Not enough use is made of direct observation of engineering learners' performance**

**in the workplace for assessment.** Most of the evidence in portfolios consists of reports written by learners and witness testimony from workplace supervisors. About a quarter of the engineering companies have employees who are qualified assessors and many of these regularly carry out direct observation of learners' performance, then giving the learners written feedback reports. However, most assessment of learners' competence does not follow this good practice.

**35. Target-setting is inadequate for some business administration learners.** The regular planned progress reviews do not set clear and specific short-term action-planning targets for learners. Assessors, learners and line managers do not hold adequate discussions to negotiate agreed short- and long-term targets for learners. Some individual learning plans are incomplete, with no recording of target dates for NVQ completion of units, revision of dates following completion of units, or details of framework key skills and technical certificates. Learning plans do not guide learners' progress or set challenging long-term targets.

**36. Some learners on retailing programmes are unclear of the requirements for the technical certificate.** The knowledge and understanding required for technical certificates in retailing is not yet supported by an off-the-job training programme with suitable resource materials. Trainers use test practice papers too much to prepare learners for technical certificates.

### **Leadership and management**

**37. HGTA's strategic management of work-based learning for young people is good.** The senior management team have provided clear direction through the three-year development plan supplemented by annual revisions, and training has improved. HGTA has clear policies and procedures on most aspects of the provision. Senior managers have an open and approachable management style. They maintain close effective contact with the staff with regular site visits, monthly team meetings, quarterly quality meetings, six-monthly programme reviews and informal face-to-face or telephone conversations.

**38. HGTA has good external links, which are very effective in supporting training.** In addition to its very effective links with the previous association member companies, HGTA has successfully widened its network following the extension of its activities in Worcester. It has enhanced its provision by gaining CoVE status in engineering following a successful bid in partnership with Worcester College of Technology. Members of the senior management team use their active membership of local providers' networks and learning partnerships effectively to exchange good practice and monitor developments in training.

**39.** HGTA has established contacts with local schools and is a subcontractor for NVQ provision in engineering and business administration for 14 to 16 year olds, providing a natural progression route into apprenticeships.

**40. HGTA places great value on developing staff.** Its policy is to recruit staff from industry with good vocational experience and qualifications. It then supports new staff with an extended period of induction and training to gain the appropriate teaching and or assessor/verifier qualifications. Staff receive good additional training and mentoring to become fully competent to carry out their duties. The low level of staff turnover allows for longer-term development.

41. **HGTA has comprehensive and effective quality assurance arrangements**, with all major procedures documented well and monitored regularly. It carries out systematic auditing against an annual audit plan and takes action to remedy non-conformities. HGTA's auditing across its operations contributes to the sharing of good practice across the company.

42. HGTA makes good use of evaluative yearly surveys to gain the views of learners, employers and staff. Individual phases of training such as induction and residential team building are also evaluated. All leavers are invited to complete an exit questionnaire. HGTA systematically analyses the information from these surveys to identify trends and problems and to plan improvements.

43. Internal verification arrangements are satisfactory. Verifiers hold appropriate qualifications and are vocationally experienced. There are sufficient internal verifiers to carry out the work. An appropriate amount of assessed work is sampled. Verifiers maintain a general overview of the process and of learners' progress. However, in engineering, much assessment is carried out towards the end of the programme and internal verification is also left until the learners have nearly completed their frameworks.

44. The self-assessment process is satisfactory and inclusive, with the views of learners, staff, employers, and partners contributing to the report. The latest self-assessment report is accurate and self-critical in the strengths, weaknesses and challenges that are identified. However, the text does not sufficiently justify the strengths and weaknesses and is insufficiently judgemental.

45. Resource management is satisfactory. The new training centre at Worcester is well equipped and, although already in use, is yet to be officially opened. It is too early to judge the impact that this and the updated equipment, recently obtained for the Hereford site through specific funding, will have on learning.

46. HGTA's promotion of equality of opportunity is satisfactory. The company has a clear comprehensive policy on equality and diversity, with a senior member of the management team carrying special responsibility for equality and diversity matters.

47. All staff receive regular training in equality of opportunity. Learners are given good training in equality as part of their induction. They are provided with copies of the policy and are given guidance on how to get additional support and assistance.

48. Learners feel that they are treated well by HGTA and in their work placements. HGTA has dealt fairly and sympathetically with the very few complaints it has received from learners about unfair treatment. However, learners receive little effective reinforcement of their understanding of equality of opportunity after their induction, particularly in the workplace.

49. HGTA provides regular updates on employment law, including equality, diversity and health and safety, to all of its member companies. Through its marketing, outreach and partnership activities, HGTA actively promotes equality and diversity among its members.

50. HGTA routinely collects data relating to equality of opportunity and analyses it to identify trends and any variations between different groups of learners. The balance

between the genders is satisfactory in business administration and retailing, but HGTA recognises that participation in its engineering programmes by women and learners from minority ethnic groups is minimal. **It has developed effective strategies to recruit more women into engineering.**

51. The teaching accommodation at both training centres has satisfactory access for wheelchair users and people with restricted mobility. Both centres have lifts and specially equipped toilet facilities for people with disabilities.

52. **HGTA's management of literacy, numeracy and language skills support is inadequate.** During initial assessment the assessor uses diagnostic tests for entry level literacy and/or numeracy skills only when they know or suspect that there may be a need for further support. No clear guidance exists on the procedures to be followed should a learner be identified with such a need. However, learners who are identified subsequently receive appropriate support.

53. HGTA has successfully dealt with and made satisfactory most of the areas identified as weaknesses at the previous inspection. **In retailing particularly, two areas of weakness have become strengths.** However, improvement to some aspects of the provision has been delayed and a few weaknesses identified in the previous inspection report or through the self-assessment process have not been rectified.

## Leadership and management

### Strengths

- good strategic management
- good external links
- good staff development
- effective strategies to recruit women into engineering
- comprehensive and effective quality assurance arrangements

### Weaknesses

- inadequate management of literacy, numeracy and language skills support
- insufficient reinforcement of equality of opportunity in the workplace

## Engineering, technology & manufacturing

### *Strengths*

- good retention rates on advanced apprenticeships
- highly effective training for first-year learners
- good practical resources at training centres
- good recruitment service for learners
- wide range of learning opportunities in the workplace

### *Weaknesses*

- low achievement and retention rates on apprenticeships

- delayed assessment of level 3 NVQ work
- insufficient use of observations for work-based assessment

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

#### *Strengths*

- good progress by learners
- good achievement and retention rates on NVQ programmes
- good work placements
- very good teaching and learning
- outstanding induction programme

#### *Weaknesses*

- inadequate target-setting for some learners

### **Retailing, customer service & transportation**

#### *Strengths*

- good progress by learners
- particularly effective progress reviews
- good range of evidence in portfolios
- effective actions to improve provision

#### *Weaknesses*

- low retention rates for apprentices starting in 2003-04
- insufficient awareness of technical certificates for some learners

## **WHAT LEARNERS LIKE ABOUT HEREFORDSHIRE GROUP TRAINING ASSOCIATION LIMITED:**

- that they get a lot of support - 'I think HGTA are brilliant'
- the one-day visits to the training centre - they break up working week
- being able to put theory into practice
- the supportive assessor
- the help they get to progress - 'from a non-employed trainee to a training and recruitment co-ordinator'
- the good advice and guidance
- the awesome residential week
- the practical engineering training in the first year - particularly the emphasis on discipline
- the small class sizes - 'I get more attention'
- the flexibility - 'because I can't always get to the training centre'
- the range of engineering jobs available in the workplace

## **WHAT LEARNERS THINK HEREFORDSHIRE GROUP TRAINING ASSOCIATION LIMITED COULD IMPROVE:**

- the disruption experienced while moving to the temporary building in Worcester
- the practical resources for electrical engineering at Hereford College
- the poor organisation at Hereford College
- the staff morale at Hereford College
- the paperwork - 'all this cross-referencing of evidence'
- the key skills
- the support from level 2 to level 3



## DETAILED INSPECTION FINDINGS

### LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

Grade 2

#### Strengths

- good strategic management
- good external links
- good staff development
- effective strategies to recruit women into engineering
- comprehensive and effective quality assurance arrangements

#### Weaknesses

- inadequate management of literacy, numeracy and language skills support
- insufficient reinforcement of equality of opportunity in the workplace

54. HGTA's strategic management of work-based learning for young people is good. The senior management team, supported by the executive committee of the association, give clear direction, and the provision of training has improved. The three-year strategic plan, supplemented by the annual development plan, sets a clear direction for the organisation which is further clarified by written policies and procedures on most aspects of the provision. Staff access the policies through HGTA's intranet and are kept aware of any changes through e-mail. An open and approachable management style pervades and senior management are in constant touch with the staff through regular visits to both sites, a series of regular meetings including monthly team meetings, quarterly quality meetings, six-monthly programme reviews and informal face-to-face or telephone conversations.

55. HGTA has good external links, which are very effective in supporting training. Its member companies furnish a wide range of knowledge and expertise to support the running of the organisation, as well as good work environments which are supportive of training. HGTA has also extended its network in scope and geographical spread following its acquisition of another provider in Worcester. Having established a good relationship with a local regional development agency, HGTA obtained funding for a feasibility study and followed this up by a successful bid in partnership with Worcester College of Technology to gain CoVE status in engineering. Members of the senior management team are active members of local providers' networks and learning partnerships through which they are able to exchange good practice and monitor developments in training. HGTA has established contacts with local schools and is a subcontractor for NVQ provision in engineering and business administration for 14 to 16 year olds, providing a natural progression route into apprenticeships.

56. Staff development is good. HGTA has a policy of recruiting staff from industry with appropriate vocational experience and qualifications. It then supports them through an extended period of induction and training to gain the appropriate teaching and or assessor/verifier qualifications and then further mentoring until they are deemed competent to fulfil their new job requirements. Staff are appraised every six months and their individual training needs are discussed and used to develop HGTA's annual learning plan. Staff turnover is low, which allows for longer-term development. Staff are encouraged to



participate in quality assurance activities, self-assessment and in cross-operational teams.

57. Resource management is satisfactory. The new training centre at Worcester is well equipped and, although already in use, is yet to be officially opened. It is too early to judge the impact that this and the updated equipment, recently obtained for the Hereford site through specific funding, will have on learning.

58. HGTA management of literacy, numeracy and language skills support is inadequate. During initial assessment the assessor uses diagnostic tests for entry level literacy and/or numeracy skills only when they know or suspect that there may be a need for further support. The procedures to be followed, should such a need be identified, are not documented or clear. There is insufficient specialist knowledge or expertise within the organisation to provide this support in-house. Key skills trainer/assessors give some individual support and learners with identified learning support needs in these areas are referred, on a case-by-case basis, to specialist providers in the area. The referral mechanism and support provided are not systematic.

### **Equality of opportunity**

### **Contributory grade 3**

59. HGTA's promotion of equality of opportunity is satisfactory. The company has a clear policy on equality and diversity, which is comprehensive and includes references to gender, ethnicity, age, disability, sexual orientation and religious beliefs. The policy is included in the staff handbook issued to all staff and is reviewed regularly to ensure that it complies with changes in legislation. A senior member of the management team has special responsibility for equality and diversity. All staff receive regular training in equality of opportunity. Learners are given good training in equality as part of their induction and are given copies of the policy, along with guidance on how to get additional support and assistance. Employers' responsibilities for equality and diversity are clearly defined in the agreement between HGTA, employers and learners. Learners feel that they are treated well by HGTA and in their work placements. There have been very few complaints about unfair treatment by learners, and when complaints have been made, HGTA has dealt with them promptly, positively and effectively to ensure that learners are treated fairly and sympathetically.

60. HGTA provides regular updates on employment law including equality, diversity, and health and safety to all of its member companies. Through its marketing, outreach and partnership activities HGTA actively promotes equality and diversity among its members.

61. HGTA routinely collects data relating to equality of opportunity and analyses it to identify trends and any variations between different groups of candidates. While the balance between the genders is satisfactory in business administration and retailing, HGTA recognises that participation in its engineering programmes by women and learners from minority ethnic groups is minimal. It has developed effective strategies to recruit more women into engineering. It has worked closely with local schools through a variety of initiatives such as training centre visits and the attendance of year 10 and year 11 students for practical workshop training. Marketing materials are carefully screened to ensure that they positively promote participation by under-represented groups, such as women in engineering. There has been a recent and significant increase in the number of women applying for apprenticeships, with six out of a total of 105 applicants in 2004, three of whom were selected among the 54 starters. Current data for the recruitment of starters for 2005 shows a similar increase in the number of women applicants. HGTA has recently

recruited a schools liaison officer to further strengthen its promotion of apprenticeships with teachers and school students. The officer focuses on the benefits that HGTA's CoVE status offers to promote engineering as a worthwhile career choice for women and learners from minority ethnic groups. HGTA has made similar efforts to increase the number of applicants from minority ethnic groups. During 2003-04 no learners on the performing engineering operations programme were from minority ethnic groups. There has been a small increase and now 1.1 per cent of learners come from minority ethnic groups. Minority ethnic groups represent 0.9 per cent of Herefordshire's population and 2.5 per cent of Worcestershire's, according to the 2001 census.

62. HGTA supports and celebrates learners' success at a number of local and national events. The company newsletter contains many articles, case studies and features about learners' achievements in qualifications, national and regional competitions and the workplace. HGTA holds an annual awards evening which is a major event in the community and is attended by many of the local employers, learners and their families and invited guests. Awards are presented by a guest celebrity carefully chosen to promote the importance and inclusiveness of training and learning.

63. Teaching accommodation at both training centres is on two floors. Both buildings have lifts that provide satisfactory access for wheelchair users and people with restricted mobility. There are specially equipped toilet facilities at both centres for people with disabilities.

64. Learners receive insufficient effective reinforcement of their awareness of equality of opportunity after their induction, particularly in the workplace. The recording of equality of opportunity topics in the workplace at progress reviews has improved since the previous inspection. However, despite the introduction of revised review forms and additional guidance to training staff on the need to reinforce the promotion of equality of opportunity, inspectors found little evidence of any significant reinforcement or promotion of the topic in most reviews. By comparison, health and safety is covered fully at reviews. Most learners could recall the key topics of harassment and bullying, and understood the rudiments of the complaints and grievance procedures. Learners had no concerns about any matters related to equality of opportunity but generally were much less clear on the wider aspects of diversity and its relevance in the workplace and for them.

### **Quality improvement**

### **Contributory grade 2**

65. HGTA's quality assurance arrangements are comprehensive and effective. All major procedures are documented well and subject to planned regular monitoring. Each aspect is systematically audited against an annual audit plan and actions are taken to remedy non-conformities. Additional auditors have been trained and have shadowed existing auditors before conducting audits. Cross-operational auditing contributes to the sharing of good practice across HGTA.

66. HGTA's systematic quality assurance arrangements are focused strongly on identifying opportunities to improve the quality of its training programmes and the support that it provides for learners and employers, rather than just compliance with procedures. The company has a clear culture of continuous improvement in its principal activities. Staff are encouraged to participate fully in a variety of continuous improvement activities. Representatives from each centre and department attend quarterly quality reviews. HGTA conducts evaluative surveys annually to elicit the views of learners, employers and staff.

Individual phases of training such as induction and residential team building are also evaluated on completion. All leavers are invited to complete an exit questionnaire. HGTA systematically analyses the information from these surveys to identify trends and causes for concern, to help guide the self-assessment process and to plan further improvements. HGTA evaluates its own practices and is always prepared to challenge and change its own approach to any of its activities when better options are proposed.

67. The operational divisions conduct thorough programme reviews twice a year which involve its staff, learners, workplace supervisors and the funding body. The review results further support development planning. Cross-operational teams introduce new initiatives to improve the provision and to develop methods of overcoming identified weaknesses.

68. HGTA has successfully dealt with, and made satisfactory, most of the areas identified as weaknesses at the previous inspection. In retailing in particular, two of the areas of weakness have become strengths. However, improvement to some aspects of the provision has been delayed and a few weaknesses identified in the previous inspection report or through self-assessment have not been rectified. For example, weaknesses identified at the previous inspection persist in the insufficient use of observations for work-based assessment in engineering, and the insufficient reinforcement of equality of opportunity.

69. Training sessions and learners' progress reviews are conducted to an annual timetable. The observations carried out across operational teams further contribute to the sharing of good practice. Additional observations, conducted by college tutors as part of staff members' progress towards appropriate teaching qualifications, are retained with in-house observations to further support quality improvement measures. Written feedback is given to all individuals observed, to guide their own development and to improve provision. Management scrutinise the observation reports and take action to remedy perceived common areas for concern. For example, HGTA now uses a standard learning session plan format for all off-the-job training, with all trainers following a common approach.

70. Internal verification arrangements are satisfactory. Verifiers hold appropriate qualifications and are vocationally experienced. There are sufficient internal verifiers to carry out the function. The percentage of assessed work sampled is appropriate and verifiers also maintain a more general overview of the process and of learners' progress. In engineering, assessment is carried out towards the end of the programme and internal verification is also left until the learners are nearing completion of their frameworks.

71. Self-assessment is satisfactory. The process is inclusive, with HGTA seeking the views of learners, staff, employers, and partners. Operational divisions assess their own activities and contribute to the overall assessment. Draft versions of the report are made available on HGTA's intranet site and further comment is invited. Self-assessment is conducted annually. The associated development plan lists and appropriately prioritises actions required to maintain strengths and to overcome weaknesses. HGTA reviews progress against the development plan quarterly. The latest self-assessment report is accurate and self-critical in the strengths, weaknesses and challenges it identifies, which have a significant impact on the learners. However, the text does not sufficiently justify the strengths and weaknesses and is insufficiently judgemental.

## AREAS OF LEARNING

### Engineering, technology & manufacturing

### Grade 2

Contributory areas:	Number of learners	Contributory grade
<b>Mechanical engineering</b>		
Apprenticeships for young people	188	2
NVQ training for young people	5	2
<b>Electrical engineering</b>		
Apprenticeships for young people	35	2

72. HGTA has 228 engineering learners of whom 199 are advanced apprentices, 24 are apprentices and five are working towards NVQs at level 3. Approximately 60 per cent of the learners are based in Herefordshire and the remainder are based in Worcestershire. All learners have employed status. Employers range from small engineering companies to large manufacturing companies producing a wide variety of products. HGTA recruits learners and matches them to suitable employers, which then interview them. First-year advanced apprentices attend four days a week at the Hereford or Worcester training centre, as they work towards completion of a level 2 NVQ in performing engineering operations. In a recent initiative, the first-year apprentices are doing some work towards the three core key skills qualifications at the training centres. All apprentices attend day-release at a local college for study towards a relevant technical certificate. Many advanced apprentices progress onto a higher national certificate in engineering in the latter stages of their programme. Apprentices attend the training centres on day release for some work on their level 2 NVQ. They are reviewed and assessed during visits to their workplace by HGTA's staff.

73. After completing their first-year of off-the-job training, the advanced apprentices spend the remaining three years working at their employers. For many learners, this involves on-the-job training in a variety of different sections of their company. They work towards completion of a level 3 NVQ, typically in engineering production or technical support. Progress reviews and assessment are mainly done by one of HGTA's four assessors. HGTA works with 27 engineering companies, seven of which employ engineering staff who are qualified assessors. Some level 3 assessment is done by these work-based assessors. HGTA's staff currently assess most of the learners' work on their key skills qualifications in the final years of their apprenticeship. Internal verification is carried out by HGTA's staff.

#### *Strengths*

- good retention rates on advanced apprenticeships
- highly effective training for first-year learners
- good practical resources at training centres
- good recruitment service for learners
- wide range of learning opportunities in the workplace

#### *Weaknesses*

- low achievement and retention rates on apprenticeships

- delayed assessment of level 3 NVQ work
- insufficient use of observations for work-based assessment

### Achievement and standards

74. The retention rates for advanced apprentices are good. Between 1998-99 and 2003-04 HGTA recruited 332 advanced apprentices. Of these, 91 have completed the framework and 145 remain in learning. All of the 2004-05 intake of 54 learners are still in learning. Framework achievement rates for advanced apprentices are satisfactory and improving. Between 1998-99 and 2000-01, HGTA recruited 139 advanced apprentices. Of these, 76 have completed all aspects of the apprenticeship framework and 11 remain in learning, giving an achievement rate so far of 55 per cent. The level of skills and knowledge demonstrated by many advanced apprentices in the final stage of their programme is good.

75. The retention and achievement rates of apprentices are low. Between 1999-2000 and 2002-03 a total of 33 apprentices started with HGTA. Only four learners have achieved all aspects of the framework and three remain in learning, giving a current achievement rate of 12 per cent. All of the 2004-05 intake of 14 apprentices are still in learning. The apprentices represent 10 per cent of the total learners currently in engineering.

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

LSC funded work-based learning																
Advanced apprenticeships	2004-05		2003-04		2002-03		2001-02		2000-01		1999-00					
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Number of starts	54		85		48		60		38	100	44	100				
Retained*	0		11		5		12		30	79	32	73				
Successfully completed	0		8		0		7		18	47	26	59				
Still in learning	54		66		37		31		9	24	2	5				

\*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	2004-05		2003-04		2002-03		2001-02		2000-01		1999-00					
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Number of starts	14		16		7	100	6	100	11	100	9	100				
Retained*	0		1		3	43	1	17	6	55	8	89				
Successfully completed	0		0		0	0	0	0	1	9	3	33				
Still in learning	14		7		1	14	1	17	1	9	0	100				

\*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	2004-05																
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	
Number of starts	5																
Retained*	0																
Successfully completed	0																
Still in learning	5																

\*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

### The quality of provision

76. Training is highly effective in meeting the needs of first-year apprenticeship learners. The programme is well managed in providing a range of well-supported training sessions for learners before formal assessment of their competence. Learners fully understand when they are being trained and assessed. They are given a range of structured practical tasks to increase their skill level and confidence. Individual support is given where needed during practical exercises which allow learners to progress at their own pace and give them opportunities to practise their new skills. Training exercises are marked and learners are given feedback that helps to develop their skills and understanding. When they and their trainer consider that they have reached an appropriate level of competence, a formal assessment task is arranged. Learners are given good feedback following assessments. Learners work on option units that are chosen by their employer to meet the specific needs of the workplace. Good emphasis is given to health and safety during all training activity. Staff successfully raise the employability skills of learners, paying particular attention to timekeeping, discipline and respect for others. Learners enjoy and value this basic training before entry to their work placement. One learner commented enthusiastically that this close attention to employability skills was just the ideal 'short, sharp shock' that he needed as he started work for the first time in his life. Employers consider that the first-year training prepares learners particularly well for work.

77. The Hereford and Worcester training centres used by first-year advanced apprentices have a wide variety of good resources. The inspection report in 2001 identified these good resources and HGTA has used recent funding through CoVE status well to develop these resources further. **The Worcester centre has been effectively redeveloped to provide an improved learning environment and a good range of new and refurbished machine tools.** HGTA's strategy has been initially to develop the Worcester site to meet the needs of first-year apprentices in fitting, machining, and welding and fabrication. The Hereford site fully caters for basic training at level 2 and its additional resources now provide good additional training opportunities in the use of the latest welding equipment, programmable logic control systems, CNC machining, testing of electrical circuits and control of electrical machines. The ratio of one trainer/assessor to every six apprentices ensures that learners can obtain guidance whenever they require it. HGTA's training staff have extensive occupational experience and are qualified in training and assessment.

78. Learners value the recruitment service supplied by HGTA. It is time efficient, provides learners with good guidance and opportunities to find out more about engineering, and effectively promotes learners to employers with vacancies. HGTA uses its strong links with engineering companies to identify apprenticeship opportunities well in advance of the



September start dates. Its good and improving promotion of work-based learning to Connexions and schools, in addition to the effect of personal recommendations, maintains a flow of applications to HGTA. All applicants are invited to undergo a series of initial assessments of their literacy, numeracy and mechanical reasoning, and are informed of the results of the tests. Following an interview with an engineering specialist, learners have a candidate profile of themselves drawn up by HGTA's staff. This profile recommends a level of programme, such as 'technician advanced apprentice' and a specialist area of engineering, such as electrical maintenance. Selected profiles are sent to engineering companies that have identified vacancies to carry out their selection process.

79. Learners are given a wide range of learning opportunities in their work placements. During the second and third year of their advanced apprenticeships, employers provide learners with a further broad base of experience through a planned sequence of on-the-job training in different sections of the company. These include machine shops, tool rooms, assembly lines, maintenance, quality control, design and development. On identification of their final placement, the learners are given varied opportunities to learn and practise their skills. Portfolios of level 3 evidence display complex work activities that have presented the learner with a good challenge. Learners are trained by experienced specialist staff in their workplace and are given additional specialist training in many placements specific to requirements of that industry. Examples include training in food hygiene for those employed in the maintenance of food and beverage manufacturing and processing plant, and advanced CNC techniques for those in machine tool production.

80. Learners produce good portfolios of evidence towards their level 3 NVQ. All learners demonstrated good levels of understanding of the content of their apprenticeship frameworks. Most learners demonstrated significant levels of motivation and enthusiasm to progress, and a few had taken responsibility for their own learning and rate of progress. Portfolios contain good use of photographs to expand on the detailed write-ups of jobs and projects involving the learner.

81. HGTA's development and assessment of key skills qualifications is satisfactory, following its implementation of the post-inspection action plan. The main focus of attention has involved one trainer/assessor working with individual fourth-year apprentices in the workplace. Examination of level 3 NVQ evidence has resulted in identification of competences in key skills. Many learners have received good individual remedial support in key skills. In addition, a series of key skills support sessions are available at the training centres for attendance by third- and fourth-year learners. Currently, a key skills specialist is working with training centre trainers and learners to identify development and assessment opportunities for key skills in numeracy, communications and IT.

82. HGTA's assessors review learners' progress in the workplace every four weeks. The process is satisfactory in monitoring progress and setting action plans. Learners feel well supported and guided by the process. However, some target-setting is not adequately specific and where action is not completed by the subsequent review it does not always result in a remedial target. Most progress reviews are conducted between the learner and the assessor, and workplace supervisors are subsequently informed of the results. The degree of involvement of supervisors in learners' progress reviews differs markedly across placements. In a few companies there is a very close working relationship, with supervisors being actively involved in planning the workplace training arrangements for learners. In other companies, however, workplace supervisors are not adequately involved in the

progress reviews. Some supervisors are not adequately informed and planning of on-the-job training is not focused on meeting learners' NVQ and key skills requirements.

83. Assessment of competence at level 3 in the workplace is delayed until a late stage in the apprenticeship. During the third and fourth years of the apprenticeship, learners produce written reports on their work and these are examined, but not assessed, by assessors during the monthly reviews. Some of this evidence does not contain adequate evaluation from the relevant workplace specialist, and in most cases the learner's written report is only endorsed by a supervisor's signature. Assessors wait until the fourth year, when they consider that the learner has reached full competence, to do a formal and final assessment of the whole portfolio of evidence. Learners, workplace supervisors and HGTA's managers do not receive adequate progress information throughout the level 3 stage of the apprenticeship. Insufficient use is made of formative assessment of learners during the early and interim stages of their level 3 work.

84. Not enough assessment is carried out by direct observation of learners' performance in the workplace. Evidence in portfolios is dominated by reports written by learners and witness testimony from workplace supervisors. Approximately 25 per cent of the engineering companies have employees who are qualified assessors. Many of these assessors use assessment by direct observation of learners' performance, with written feedback reports to learners, on a regular basis. However, this good practice is not followed in most assessment of learners' competence.

### **Leadership and management**

85. HGTA manages its engineering learners and programmes well. Its management of the recruitment, selection, training and assessment of first-year learners is particularly good. HGTA has made good use of CoVE funding to further develop the practical resources in the training centres. Internal verification is satisfactory. At level 2, verification of portfolios is thorough but it is not always continuous throughout the assessment of units. Assessors are formally observed in the assessment process each year. Trainer/assessors and the internal verifiers in the training centres work well as a team. The assessment of level 3 NVQs is delayed, and the internal verification process is concentrated at the end of the training programme. Verification of portfolio evidence is thorough and results in useful written and verbal feedback to assessors. Communications between managers, assessors and verifiers in each of the training centres are good, while communications between relevant staff across the two centres are satisfactory.



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

<b>Contributory areas:</b>	<b>Number of learners</b>	<b>Contributory grade</b>
<b>Business administration</b> Apprenticeships for young people	78	2
<b>Accounting and economics</b> Apprenticeships for young people	11	2
NVQ training for young people	13	2

86. HGTA provides training for 62 apprentices and 27 advanced apprentices in business administration and accounting, and 13 learners working towards level 4 NVQs in accounting. Learners are recruited through employers, Connexions, schools or by personal recommendation. HGTA finds work placements for unemployed learners before they start the programme. Off-the-job training is offered to learners on one day each week. Learners work in a variety of organisations, including local manufacturing companies, healthcare providers and local councils. Supervisors in the workplace provide occupational training. There are four trainers, and five full-time and two part-time assessors who assess learners in the workplace and provide them with support. The assessors review learners' progress every four weeks.

*Strengths*

- good progress by learners
- good achievement and retention rates on NVQ programmes
- good work placements
- very good teaching and learning
- outstanding induction programme

*Weaknesses*

- inadequate target-setting for some learners

**Achievement and standards**

87. Retention rates are good and improving. Of those learners who started their training within the past two years, 79 per cent of advanced apprentices and 82 per cent of apprentices are still in learning or have completed their framework. The retention rate was satisfactory for the 2002-03 intake, with 53 per cent of apprentices and advanced apprentices being retained.

88. Achievement and retention rates are good for learners on NVQ programmes. Of the 34 learners starting NVQ programmes between 2000-01 and 2003-04, 85 per cent were retained and 74 per cent achieved their qualification. All 12 learners starting NVQ programmes in 2004-05 are still in learning.

89. Achievement rates are satisfactory for apprentices and advanced apprentices. Measured against their prior achievement, administration learners are making good progress towards achieving their learning aims. The standard of learners' work

## HEREFORDSHIRE GROUP TRAINING ASSOCIATION LIMITED

demonstrates good development of administration skills. Portfolios are well organised and learners' written work is professionally presented. Learners collect a comprehensive range of NVQ evidence including witness statements, observations, reports, photographs and hard copy documents. They are developing good practical skills in the workplace, as is reflected in the levels of additional responsibilities delegated to them by employers. A significant number of learners are on accelerated learning programmes that meet their individual needs of achieving challenging learning goals. A high proportion of learners progress from the level 2 programme to the level 3 business administration programme.

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

<b>LSC funded work-based learning</b>																
<b>Advanced apprenticeships</b>	<b>2004-05</b>		<b>2003-04</b>		<b>2002-03</b>		<b>2001-02</b>		<b>2000-01</b>							
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Number of starts	21		37		17	100	28	100	22	100						
Retained*	1		27		9	53	20	71	8	36						
Successfully completed	1		18		7	41	17	61	7	32						
Still in learning	18		9		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

<b>LSC funded work-based learning</b>																
<b>Apprenticeships</b>	<b>2004-05</b>		<b>2003-04</b>		<b>2002-03</b>		<b>2001-02</b>		<b>2000-01</b>							
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Number of starts	40		70		80	100	66	100	47	100						
Retained*	1		60		42	52	46	70	26	55						
Successfully completed	0		28		41	51	35	53	25	53						
Still in learning	34		28		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

<b>LSC funded work-based learning</b>																
<b>NVQ Training</b>	<b>2004-05</b>		<b>2003-04</b>		<b>2002-03</b>		<b>2001-02</b>		<b>2000-01</b>							
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Number of starts	12		12		12	100	7	100	3	100						
Retained*	0		9		11	92	6	86	3	100						
Successfully completed	0		9		10	83	5	71	1	33						
Still in learning	12		1		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

### The quality of provision

90. Business administration learners benefit from good work placements. Workplace supervisors understand what is required of them to help learners to complete their programmes successfully, and they provide good opportunities for learners to develop their skills. A number of employers have flexible arrangements that allow learners to work on

their portfolios during the day. One employer gives its trainee weekly study leave. On-the-job related training at another employer in topics such as spreadsheets, time management and client relationships provides evidence that is linked to the learners' NVQ units. Employers are involved well in learners' progress. They are fully informed by HGTA about framework requirements and take an active role in supporting their learners. Links between assessors and employers are good and supervisors value the regular contact they have with assessors. Many employers have a good understanding of NVQ requirements. Employers are flexible to learners' needs and provide on-the-job training in response to needs identified through progress reviews and assessment procedures. The programmes and courses clearly meet the needs and interests of learners and employers.

91. Teaching and learning are very good in business administration. Learning sessions are well planned with clear, purposeful structures and activities. Trainers share training and learning materials. Learning tasks and activities are sufficiently demanding and varied. In one training session, learners used their time effectively, working through exercises and activities in pairs and groups to develop team-building skills and evaluating their roles using prepared evaluation sheets. The training had a clear structure in preparing learners for a residential outdoor team-building course. Appropriate and frequent checks were made on learning, with learners completing evaluations and trainers questioning learners' progress and understanding. However, inspectors saw no evidence of planning for the different needs and abilities of individual learners during the delivery of training. Learners use materials and worksheets effectively in training sessions to record and collect evidence for NVQ units. Learners are adequately screened for their literacy and numeracy skills support needs at the start of their programme, and are informed of their results. No learner on programme is currently receiving support for literacy or numeracy.

92. The induction programme for learners is outstanding. At recruitment, learners receive comprehensive advice before they enrol. Learners commented on helpful and supportive staff. Individual learning needs are accurately diagnosed and learners have access to effective additional support throughout their programme. They receive effective personal support to help them complete their programme, including access to specialist support services such as counselling. The two-week induction informs learners about the structure and aims of their training. It covers HGTA's history and background, and the resources available to learners. Learners are introduced to their own responsibilities and rights in the workplace and those of their workplace supervisors. Innovative games and activities are used to develop learners' team-working, communication and presentation skills. Equality of opportunity is covered comprehensively with full discussions and debate about aspects of equality in the workplace, based on the group analysing scenarios in a training video programme. Learners develop essential administration skills such as filing, keyboarding and telephone use. The induction presents information clearly and imaginatively on first aid, health and safety, fire fighting and manual handling. Learners record the activities which take place during the induction in personal logbooks. Workplace supervisors attend presentations on the final day at which learners give their overviews of all elements of their induction programme.

93. Target-setting is inadequate for some learners. Although planned reviews are conducted on a regular basis, they are inconsistent. Some reviews do not set clear and specific short-term action-planning targets for learners. Communication between assessors, learners and line managers is regular, but line managers are not consistently involved in discussions with learners and assessors to negotiate agreed short- and long-term targets for

learners. Some individual learning plans are incomplete, with no recording of target dates for the achievement of NVQ units. Some targets for NVQ unit completion have the same dates with no variation to reflect when the learner started or plans to complete particular units. These plans do not support learners' progress or set challenging long-term targets. Key skills qualifications and technical certificates are not always listed.

### **Leadership and management**

94. Business administration programmes are managed well. Formal and informal communications are effective. Staff meetings are held regularly and minuted, and action subsequently taken is monitored. Staff are kept well informed of course changes through very good links with the awarding bodies. The business administration department keeps reliable information on learners' progress which is appropriately monitored. The internal observation of training is effective and maintains good standards in training and learning. Resources are good. Trainers are well qualified with wide commercial administrative experience. The internal verification process has been well established in business administration. The internal verification plan incorporates sampling of observed assessments. The internal verifier reports on assessors' performance and gives them clear action points. Staff development is well planned and effective, with most staff development taking place internally. Training rooms are well equipped and maintained with up-to-date hardware and software. Teaching teams share well-developed teaching materials, but no intranet exists for learners to access learning materials or carry out research through dedicated web links. The self-assessment report is sufficiently self-critical and identifies key weaknesses, and HGTA has taken appropriate action to rectify declining retention rates at Worcester. The department provides good value for money.

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

<b>Contributory areas:</b>	<b>Number of learners</b>	<b>Contributory grade</b>
<b>Retailing</b> Apprenticeships for young people	7	2
<b>Customer service</b> Apprenticeships for young people	22	2
<b>Warehousing and distribution</b> Apprenticeships for young people	7	2

95. Thirty-six learners are following programmes in retailing, customer service and warehousing. Nineteen of those are advanced apprentices and three are apprentices in customer service. Two are advanced apprentices and five are apprentices in retailing, and the remaining seven are warehousing apprentices. Most learners are employed and work in a variety of organisations including major retailing outlets and small local businesses. Assessors visit learners in the workplace every two weeks. All learners receive an induction which covers the content of the training programme, equality of opportunity and health and safety.

*Strengths*

- good progress by learners
- particularly effective progress reviews
- good range of evidence in portfolios
- effective actions to improve provision

*Weaknesses*

- low retention rates for apprentices starting in 2003-04
- insufficient awareness of technical certificates for some learners

**Achievement and standards**

96. The progress made by learners towards completion of their programmes and in their employment is now good, having improved since the previous inspection. Slow rates of progress towards the completion of frameworks were a key weakness in the previous inspection. The framework completion rate for apprentices has improved from 36 per cent, for those starting in 2001-02, to 56 per cent for the 2002-03 starters. At the previous inspection, only one learner had completed an advanced apprenticeship framework. Since 2002-03, five of the 30 starters have completed their framework and 21 are still in learning and making good progress towards completing their frameworks. Learners have good progression opportunities and many advance from level 2 to level 3 qualifications. Many learners progress well in employment and been promoted to supervisory posts. Several now have responsibility for supporting and mentoring new learners from HGTA. Learners have access to a range of additional qualifications in topics including first aid at work and health and safety. They also have the opportunity to attend an outdoor residential team-building course that is used to generate evidence towards key skills.

## HEREFORDSHIRE GROUP TRAINING ASSOCIATION LIMITED

97. The retention rates for apprentices are satisfactory except for the 2003-04 intake, where the retention rate is low. The retention rate declined from 89 per cent for 2002-03 starters to 48 per cent for starters in 2003-04, when a group of learners from one employer left the scheme early. Eighty per cent of the learners recruited in 2004-05 are still in learning.

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

<b>LSC funded work-based learning</b>																	
<b>Advanced apprenticeships</b>	<b>2004-05</b>		<b>2003-04</b>		<b>2002-03</b>		<b>2001-02</b>		<b>2000-01</b>								
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	
Number of starts	10		13	100	7	100	6	100	8	100							
Retained*	1		3	23	6	86	5	83	2	25							
Successfully completed	0		3	23	2	29	0	0	1	12							
Still in learning	10		8	62	3	43	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

<b>LSC funded work-based learning</b>																	
<b>Apprenticeships</b>	<b>2004-05</b>		<b>2003-04</b>		<b>2002-03</b>		<b>2001-02</b>		<b>2000-01</b>								
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	
Number of starts	10		17	100	9	100	22	100	15	100							
Retained*	0		9	53	8	89	11	50	7	47							
Successfully completed	0		3	18	5	56	8	36	6	40							
Still in learning	8		6	35	1	11	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

### The quality of provision

98. Learners' progress reviews are particularly effective. Progress review meetings are used to set learners short-term targets and their progress against each agreed target is well monitored at the next visit. Learners speak positively of the benefits arising from reviews. Effective short-term targets are set and learners have a clear understanding of what they have to do before the next visit. Reviews are used to monitor both health and safety, and equality of opportunity. Matters that may hinder learners' progress are identified and HGTA is able to establish which learners are judged to be at risk from slow progress. Employers are actively involved in the review process and provide good support to learners.

99. HGTA actively attempts to meet the needs of employers and their learners by providing additional training in retailing, customer service and distribution topics. HGTA acts as a recruitment agency for some employers by carrying out the initial interview of potential employees. Employers assist in the promotion of work-based learning by attending careers conventions in partnership with HGTA.

100. Portfolios contain a good range of evidence. Assessors encourage and help learners to gather a wide range of interesting evidence of their individual achievements in their

portfolio. Learners take pride in their portfolios, which contain good work. Digital photography of assessments carried out in the workplace is used well by learners in their portfolios and by assessors in their completed observation reports. Learners value greatly this personal approach to their assessment. Assessment practices are satisfactory. Learners enjoy their work and speak positively of the support they receive from their assessors.

101. Initial assessment arrangements are satisfactory, with results recorded in the learners' individual learning plans. Although HGTA has no formal arrangements for identifying learners with additional literacy and numeracy skills support needs, it responds effectively and immediately with appropriate assistance for those who require it. Individual learning plans record short-term, medium- and long-term targets. However, target dates are not always recorded consistently in the plans.

102. Some learners do not sufficiently understand the requirements of the technical certificate. HGTA has yet to develop materials to support technical certificates in retailing. It offers no programme of off-the-job training to support the delivery of the knowledge and understanding required to gain technical certificates. Trainers rely too much on the use of test practice papers to prepare learners for technical certificates. HGTA provides training for the NVQ and key skills qualifications at its centres in Hereford and Worcester. However, employers are reluctant to release learners for off-the-job training and take-up is not high. Instead, assessors deliver individual training in the workplace that is supported with a range of adequate resource materials. The key skills trainer visits learners in the workplace to deliver key skills training. Employers offer a range of in-house training programmes but learners do not use the knowledge and understanding evidence generated from these programmes for their NVQs.

### **Leadership and management**

103. The retailing team has taken effective action to rectify the two weaknesses of slow progress by learners and ineffective reviews identified at the previous inspection. However, learners do not get written plans for their assessments. The retailing team has agreed on the format and structure of an assessment plan but at the time of the inspection this was not being used. There is a strong willingness in the retailing team to continuously improve. Assessors are appropriately qualified and have access to a good range of NVQ and key skills resource materials. Internal verification is satisfactory and appropriately qualified internal verifiers are in place. Internal verification takes place throughout the programme in the workplace and in the centre. Learners have a satisfactory awareness of equality of opportunity. They receive equality of opportunity training during their induction and are able to attend additional workshops on equality and diversity training throughout their programme.