

INSPECTION REPORT

Lancaster Training Services Ltd

08 December 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.
- adult information, advice and guidance services (**nextstep**)

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*

INSPECTION REPORT

Lancaster Training Services Ltd

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INSPECTION REPORT

DESCRIPTION OF THE PROVIDER

1. Lancaster Training Services Ltd (LTS) was founded in December 1968 by a consortium of 10 haulage contractors in conjunction with the Road Transport Industry Training Board. It operates from one site in Lancaster and employs 15 full-time and two part-time staff, of whom eight full-time staff work in the training section. LTS provides training for 57 apprentices and 31 advanced apprentices, all of whom are employed by a range of employers across Lancashire and Cumbria. LTS provides off-the-job training for motor vehicle mechanics at its training centre and subcontracts motor vehicle body repair training to Blackpool and The Fylde College. LTS's apprenticeship programmes are funded through a contract with Lancashire Learning and Skills Council (LSC). LTS also provides a range of commercial driver training courses. These are privately funded and are not within the current inspection remit.

2. In November 2004, LTS was invited to become part of a collaborative automotive centre of vocational excellence (CoVE) for heavy vehicle. LTS is now part way into its first year as a collaborative CoVE and is working to the milestones set out in the first-year action plan. As part of a local regeneration project, the current LTS training centre will be relocated. A new larger site has been identified.

OVERALL EFFECTIVENESS

Grade 2

3. **The overall effectiveness of the provision is good.** In engineering and manufacturing technologies the provision is good, as is the leadership and management and the arrangements for quality improvement. Equality of opportunity is satisfactory.

4. **The inspection team had a high degree of confidence in the reliability of the self-assessment process.** The self-assessment process is good. LTS has produced an annual self-assessment for a number of years. This builds on previous self-assessments and the previous external inspection reports. The process draws on performance data, the evaluation of feedback, and items discussed during in-house training group meetings. A number of self-assessment report writing meetings are used to give staff the opportunity to identify strengths and weaknesses in relation to the criteria in the Common Inspection Framework. The final report is co-ordinated by the senior tutor. The judgements in the self-assessment report were also identified by inspectors.

5. **The provider has demonstrated that it is in a good position to make improvements.** LTS is a self-critical organisation and takes quality improvement seriously. Retention and achievement rates have improved since the previous inspection and the good inspection grades have been maintained. The development plan sets good actions in relation to the strengths and weaknesses identified in the self-assessment report. Responsibilities, timescales, the impact of the action on the learner and the means by which success will be measured are clearly defined. LTS closely monitors improvement actions and records progress.

KEY CHALLENGES FOR LANCASTER TRAINING SERVICES LTD:

- continue to improve retention and achievement rates
- improve the learners' awareness of equality and diversity
- more sharing of best practice across the apprenticeship programme
- further development of the quality improvement system
- maintain and improve the good provision during the relocation of premises

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 and manufacturing technologies			2
Contributory areas:	Number of learners	Contributory grade	
Motor vehicle		2	
Apprenticeships for young people	88	2	

ABOUT THE INSPECTION

6. Three inspectors spent 12 days inspecting LTS. During this time, they observed classes, interviewed staff and met with learners and employers around Lancashire and Cumbria. Inspectors judged LTS's progress in maintaining the strengths and dealing with the weaknesses identified at the previous inspection.

Number of inspectors	3
Number of inspection days	12
Number of learners interviewed	46
Number of staff interviewed	13
Number of employers interviewed	12
Number of subcontractors interviewed	1
Number of locations/sites/learning centres visited	18
Number of partners/external agencies interviewed	1

KEY FINDINGS

Achievements and standards

7. **Retention and achievement rates are improving.** Of the 95 apprentices who have started in the past few years, 22 have already completed the framework and 55 remain in learning. Of the 56 advanced apprentices, 18 have completed the framework and 30 remain in learning. LTS has a good understanding of the reasons why leavers leave.

8. **Practical skills are developed well.** The level 2 national vocational qualification (NVQ) and key skills are achieved within two years by most learners. Learners quickly develop good skills in their workplace and are able to work on complex tasks with limited supervision.

The quality of provision

Grades given to learning sessions

	Grade 1	Grade 2	Grade 3	Grade 4	Total
Engineering and manufacturing technologies	1	2	0	0	3
Total	1	2	0	0	3

9. **Their off-the-job training is good.** Experienced and qualified staff plan lessons well from a clear programme of work. Good use is made of up-to-date technology, and learners participate fully in learning. Regular confirmation of understanding is made during sessions. Additional learning support is given discretely through regular individual sessions. Workshop sessions are well planned and have satisfactory resources.

10. **There is a thorough review system.** Training officers review learners' progress twice every nine weeks. Excellent documents effectively guide the process, showing NVQ progress as a percentage of achievement for each unit. This is discussed in detail with the employer and the learner.

11. Employers are very supportive of the review process and spend time and care with their learners. The review reinforces good health and safety and also ensures the well-being of the learner.

12. **Learners' progress is monitored well.** All learners have a record of their progress, which is updated regularly. The information is used in the monthly management meetings where learners who are not making satisfactory progress are highlighted.

13. **Assessment is provided on demand for most learners.** Those learners who are assessed by LTS staff have access to a very responsive assessment service. Requests for assessment can be made at very short notice, by telephone, when the opportunity for observation of a specific job arises in the workplace. Often assessors are able to start an assessment within 20 to 30 minutes of a telephone request.

14. **A comprehensive three-day induction programme takes place at the training centre.** It includes presentations from external speakers including advice on drugs awareness and financial matters. However, learners have difficulty recalling the information given on

equality of opportunity at induction. Staff work closely with learners and their employers when preparing individual learning plans during the induction programme.

15. Initial assessment is satisfactory. A basic skills test is used to identify learners' literacy and numeracy levels, a diagnostic assessment is carried out to identify their support needs, and there is an assessment of their occupational interests. After initial assessment, additional learning support is provided for learners where necessary. Learners also take a key skills self-assessment to help them understand their own learning needs.

16. **The target-setting is weak for some learners.** Insufficient guidance is given on what would help the learners achieve their targets. Achievement dates are included but these are imprecise and often not rigorously applied. Some of the targets are easily achievable and are not challenging enough. The targets are not always achievable and are insufficiently detailed.

17. **Learners have a poor awareness of equality of opportunity.** Learners are given information on equality during their induction which is comprehensive, but little of this is remembered even by new learners. Learners are asked during review for confirmation that they are being treated fairly but there is no attempt to reinforce their knowledge. Training sessions do not include further information on equality.

18. **Some opportunities for assessment are not taken.** Learners on the body and paint operations programmes miss out on some assessment opportunities. Subcontractor assessors plan a date for assessment but little consideration is given to the type of task that will be available. Learners who are near the end of their training find that appropriate jobs are difficult to obtain and the availability of an assessor is not flexible enough to meet the learners' needs.

Leadership and management

19. **The management of LTS is particularly effective.** Senior managers have a very good understanding of the needs of customers and learners. There are good strategic plans and business plans. Managers have a good understanding of business threats and new opportunities. Prudent financial management has ensured that there are sufficient funds to support the new developments.

20. **Internal and external communications are very effective.** A communications strategy has been established which forms a core element of quality improvement. Regular team meetings are held, detailed minutes are taken and good actions are followed up.

21. **There is very good quality improvement action-planning.** This includes actions to improve retention and achievement. There are high levels of accountability for the various improvement actions. At the end of quality improvement meetings, all actions are summarised, including those carried forward from previous meetings, and responsibilities are allocated.

22. **The self-assessment process is good.** LTS has produced an annual self-assessment for a number of years. This builds on previous reports and the previous external inspection reports. The process draws on performance data, the evaluation of feedback, and items discussed during in-house training group meetings.

23. **The development plan includes good actions in relation to the various strengths and weaknesses identified in the self-assessment report.** Responsibilities, timescales, the impact of the action on the learner and the means by which success will be measured are clearly defined. LTS closely monitors improvement actions and records progress.

24. Appraisals and staff development are satisfactory. Appraisals take place twice a year and more frequently for newly appointed staff. Progress is reviewed against a range of criteria and, where appropriate, targets are set in relation to retention and achievement.

25. Staff attend a range of appropriate development activities such as dyslexia awareness, equal opportunities awareness and, in some cases, higher education. Staff are rarely denied additional training, providing it fits in with the strategic plan.

26. The collection and analysis of data is satisfactory. The quality and accuracy of information on retention and achievement is sound. Performance of learner groups is monitored every month. For each intake, a graphical format is used to show current levels of retention and achievement.

27. The management of resources is satisfactory. The current site is due for redevelopment as part of a local regeneration project. LTS has identified a suitable site and has allocated resources for the construction of a purpose built training centre.

28. Policies and procedures relating to equal opportunities are satisfactory. These are regularly reviewed as part of the quality assurance system. They include arrangements for dealing with complaints and grievance. A small number of complaints have been received and these have been dealt with sensitively, promptly and to the satisfaction of all parties.

29. A wide range of initiatives has taken place to raise staff awareness of equality. Through joint activities with another local training provider, staff have been provided with an equality and diversity workbook and in due course will be completing an assessment of their knowledge. LTS subscribes to an information service whereby it receives regular information updates and workbooks on equality and diversity.

30. **Feedback from learners and employers is collected, analysed and evaluated.** For all surveys, recommendations for improvement are made.

31. Although satisfactory observation of training sessions has been introduced and assessment is observed through the effective internal verification system, this has not been extended to the formal observation of all key training processes.

32. **LTS has established good quality improvement systems and procedures**, including a well-defined quality assurance and improvement strategy. These are wide-ranging and have been in place for a number of years. There is a system of document control with regular reviews of all systems and procedures to a predetermined schedule.

33. A subcontractor is used for the training and assessment of a small number of learners. **The monitoring of this subcontractor is good.** The contract between LTS and the subcontractor is detailed and clearly identifies responsibilities for each party. There are frequent meetings to review learners' progress, and information is shared on matters such

as attendance and progress.

34. **The facilities are not accessible for people with restricted mobility.** However, following a recent audit, relating to the Disability Discrimination Act 1995, some improvements have been made, such as portable wheelchair ramps and the marking of steps and pathways. Various posters relating to equality and diversity are displayed in classrooms and workshops.

35. Data on retention and achievement includes the analysis of different learner groups such as women, those with a disability, those who are receiving support and those from a minority ethnic group.

36. Satisfactory efforts are made to recruit learners from non-stereotypical groups. Challenging equality and diversity impact measures have been set. Marketing materials use positive images to portray work in the motor vehicle sector.

37. **There is insufficient ongoing development of learners' understanding of equal opportunities.** Learners are confused by the large amount of information covered at induction.

38. **There has been slow progress in the development of the skills for life strategy.** Skills for life is the government's strategy on training in literacy, numeracy and the use of language. LTS has formulated a development plan but, so far, there has been little progress in taking this forward. One member of staff has been allocated responsibility for additional learning support and key skills.

39. **Learners' awareness of equal opportunities is low and they have a limited recall of the content covered during their induction.** Equality of opportunity is routinely checked during reviews.

Leadership and management

Strengths

- wide-ranging initiatives to raise awareness of equality by staff
- particularly effective management
- good internal and external communications
- comprehensive quality assurance procedures
- good monitoring of subcontractor
- good collection and analysis of learners' and employers' feedback
- very good quality improvement action-planning
- good self-assessment process

Weaknesses

- slow progress in developing skills for life strategy
- insufficient ongoing development of learners' understanding of equality
- insufficient formal observation of key learning processes

Engineering and manufacturing technologies

Motor vehicle

Grade 2

Strengths

- improving retention and achievement rates
- good development of practical skills
- good off-the-job training
- thorough review system
- good monitoring of learners' progress
- good on-demand assessment for most learners

Weaknesses

- weak target-setting for some learners
- poor awareness of equal opportunities by learners
- missed opportunities for assessment for some learners

WHAT LEARNERS LIKE ABOUT LANCASTER TRAINING SERVICES LTD:

- the practical work - particularly the complex jobs
- going out on breakdowns
- working with engines, gearboxes and clutches
- the people they work with
- the job satisfaction
- 'taking in a crashed vehicle and sending out a shiny one'
- the good tutors at the training centre
- the training centre - 'it's a laugh'
- the coffee in the drinks machine

WHAT LEARNERS THINK LANCASTER TRAINING SERVICES LTD COULD IMPROVE:

- the outside work
- some of the cleaning jobs
- the heating in the workshop at the LTS training centre

DETAILED INSPECTION FINDINGS

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

Grade 2

Strengths

- wide-ranging initiatives to raise awareness of equality by staff
- particularly effective management
- good internal and external communications
- comprehensive quality assurance procedures
- good monitoring of subcontractor
- good collection and analysis of learners' and employers' feedback
- very good quality improvement action-planning
- good self-assessment process

Weaknesses

- slow progress in developing skills for life strategy
- insufficient ongoing development of learners' understanding of equality
- insufficient formal observation of key learning processes

40. The management of LTS is particularly effective. Senior managers have a very good understanding of the needs of LTS customers and learners, and work hard to ensure that expectations are met and exceeded. There are good strategic plans and business plans which have been formulated with good levels of staff involvement and support from the board. The strategic plan details the future direction of the business. Managers have a good understanding of business threats and new opportunities. They are flexible in the delivery of apprenticeship programmes and other training, and are responsive to new developments such as the opportunity to be a partner in a specialist CoVE. Staff have good access to senior managers and when problems arise, these are quickly remedied. For a number of years, LTS has been preparing for a move of premises linked to the redevelopment of the current site. Preparation for this move is well recorded and staff are kept informed about progress. Prudent financial management has ensured that there are sufficient funds to support the new developments.

41. Internal and external communications are very effective. A communications strategy has been established which forms a core element of quality improvement. Regular team meetings are held which include standing agenda items from which very detailed meeting minutes are produced. Recommendations are made in team meetings for additional learning support and continuous monitoring of learners at risk of leaving the programme early. All proposed action is followed up at subsequent meetings. There are also regular informal daily meetings for the training team and manager, which ensure that potential problems are dealt with quickly. Training officers maintain productive links with employers, which express high levels of satisfaction with the communication from LTS. During the past year, LTS has become a partner in a CoVE managed by another local training provider. Communications with this provider are productive and have already led to joint training activities and the sharing of best practice.

42. Appraisals and staff development are satisfactory. LTS has recently been reaccredited with the Investor in People standard, a standard for improving an organisation's performance through its people. Appraisals take place twice a year and more frequently for newly appointed staff. Progress is reviewed against a range of criteria and, where appropriate, targets are set in relation to retention and achievement. LTS identifies that it needs to improve its staff review form in relation to performance management data. Staff attend a range of appropriate development activities such as dyslexia awareness, equal opportunities awareness and, in some cases, higher education. Staff are rarely denied additional training, providing it relates to the strategic plan.

43. The collection and analysis of data is satisfactory. The quality and accuracy of information on retention and achievement is sound. Performance of learner groups is monitored on a monthly basis as part of the in-house training group. For each intake, a graphical format is used to show current levels of retention and achievement. On the same chart, LTS shows the national average achievement rate as well as its own achievement target and the local LSC target. This is helping staff to have a better understanding of how the company is performing. LTS uses a recognised management information system to record data on learners, but this is mostly limited to information in relation to the LSC financial return. A separate management information system for monitoring progress is being developed. It is planned that individual progress reports will be provided to fit in with learners' progress reviews.

44. Resource management is satisfactory. LTS is no longer investing in its current training centre other than for the provision of portable and consumable equipment, and for emergency repairs. The current site is due for redevelopment as part of a local regeneration project. LTS has identified a suitable site and has allocated resources for the construction of a purpose-built training centre.

45. There has been slow progress in the development of the skills for life strategy. A consultant has helped LTS to identify the current position and to formulate a development plan, but, so far, there has been little progress in taking this forward. A newly appointed member of staff has received skills for life training as part of a previous job role and another member of staff is receiving training. One member of staff has been allocated responsibility for additional learning support and key skills. LTS is in the process of purchasing learning materials which are designed to support skills for life development within a motor vehicle context. In its self-assessment report, LTS identified the need to raise staff awareness of skills for life.

Equality of opportunity

Contributory grade 3

46. Overall responsibility for equality and diversity lies with the training manager. Policies and procedures relating to equal opportunities are satisfactory. These are regularly reviewed as part of the quality assurance system. They include arrangements for dealing with complaints and grievances. A small number of complaints have been received and these have been dealt with sensitively, promptly and to the satisfaction of all parties. When learners start, the employer information pack includes a useful range of information on equality and diversity. Placement officers make informal checks as to the appropriateness of employers' premises and levels of supervision, before learners are placed. Good efforts are made to place the more vulnerable learners with appropriately supportive employers. Where improvements are made to equal opportunities policies and procedures, this

information is shared with employers.

47. A wide range of initiatives has taken place to raise staff awareness of equal opportunities. Through joint activities with another local training provider, staff have been provided with an equality and diversity workbook and in due course will be completing an assessment of their knowledge. LTS subscribes to an information service whereby it receives regular information updates and workbooks relating to a range of equality and diversity topics. As part of a disability audit of premises, staff have received awareness training in relation to the Disability Discrimination Act 1995. Equal opportunities form an agenda item at all staff meetings and there is good discussion about training, learner issues and future developments in relation to equality and diversity, such as local ethnicity and diversity impact measures. Where actions are set, these are closely monitored.

48. LTS has put considerable effort into increasing the amount of information given to learners during their induction. This consists of a lengthy overview of equality and diversity. A follow-up questionnaire is used following the induction to check learners' knowledge of harassment and bullying and other key equal opportunities questions. Despite this, learners' awareness is low and they have a limited recall of the induction. Equality of opportunity is routinely checked during reviews. This includes questions relating to the treatment of learners by their colleagues and checking that they have a suitable range of learning experiences.

49. There is insufficient ongoing development of learners' understanding of equality. Learners are confused by the large amount of information received at their induction. Ongoing equal opportunities training is not part of the motor vehicle learning plan. Good opportunities to integrate this with subjects such as communications, key skills and customer care have not been identified. Additional training sessions to reinforce equality and diversity do not form any part of the apprenticeship programme.

50. There are satisfactory efforts to recruit learners from non-stereotypical groups. Challenging equality and diversity impact measures have been set. Marketing materials use positive images to portray work in the motor vehicle sector. Work at a local careers event, through mock interview sessions, work tasters for local schools, community groups and Connexions, is used to raise the profile of LTS training programmes. Data on retention and achievement includes the analysis of different learner groups such as women, those with a disability, those receiving support and those from a minority ethnic group. With small numbers, LTS has found it difficult to identify any particular statistical trends.

51. LTS's facilities are not accessible for people with restricted mobility. However, following a recent audit, relating to the Disability Discrimination Act 1995, some improvements have been made, such as portable wheelchair ramps and the marking of steps and pathways. With a planned move to new premises, LTS has not invested heavily in current facilities. Through the audit, it has identified the minimum level of improvements necessary for the current facilities. Various posters relating to equality and diversity are displayed in classrooms and workshops.

Quality improvement

Contributory grade 2

52. LTS has established good quality improvement systems and procedures, including a well-defined quality assurance and improvement strategy. These are wide-ranging and have been in place for a number of years. Quality improvement systems cover business

planning, communications, staffing matters, health and safety, equal opportunities and all key aspects of the training process, such as recruitment, induction, training, assessment and verification. Staff, including those appointed recently, understand the purpose of these systems. A well-recorded document control system is in place, with regular reviews of all systems and procedures according to a predetermined schedule.

53. A subcontractor is used for the training and assessment of a small number of learners. The contract between LTS and the subcontractor is detailed and clearly identifies responsibilities for each party. There are frequent meetings to review learners' progress and a good flow of information on matters such as attendance and progress. As part of the contract, LTS staff jointly observe training sessions alongside the subcontractors' staff. This is used to assure LTS that the classroom teaching is adequate. However, where assessment is subcontracted, LTS has not been able to influence the contractor to follow the same on-demand assessment arrangements.

54. Feedback from learners and employers is collected, analysed and evaluated. Learners complete questionnaires after induction and then annually, and there is a good rate of response. An exit questionnaire is used for learners who leave early and LTS has a very clear view of the reasons why and why interventions have not been successful. All problems are recorded and analysed as part of the quality improvement strategy. The annual employers' questionnaire receives a satisfactory rate of response and analysis is used to identify those aspects which employers feel need improving. Recommendations for improvement are made after each survey.

55. There is very good quality improvement action-planning. This includes actions to improve retention and achievement. An in-house training group meets every month and attendance is good. Minutes are well recorded and start with close scrutiny of actions agreed at the previous meeting. There are high levels of accountability for the various improvement actions. At the end of meetings, all actions are summarised, including those carried forward from previous meetings, and responsibilities are allocated. These meetings make use of a standard agenda which includes health and safety, equal opportunities, resources, learners' welfare issues, and actions to support learners at risk of leaving the programme early. Where a learner has left the programme early, minutes show clearly any interventions that have taken place. In some cases, a learner's circumstances have been monitored for several months.

56. Although observations of training sessions have been introduced and assessment is observed through the effective internal verification system, this has not been extended to all key training processes. Observations do not cover induction, initial assessment, learners' progress reviews, equal opportunities training, and additional literacy and numeracy support activities. In its self-assessment report, LTS identifies that there is no process for the evaluation of additional learning support. Newly appointed staff receive support and guidance through informal observation of their work activities.

57. The self-assessment process is good. LTS has produced an annual self-assessment for a number of years. This builds on previous self-assessment reports and the external inspection reports. The process draws on performance data, the evaluation of feedback, and items discussed during in-house training group meetings. A number of self-assessment report writing meetings are used to give staff the opportunity to identify strengths and weaknesses in relation to the Common Inspection Framework criteria. The final report is

co-ordinated by the senior tutor. Most of the judgements in the self-assessment report were also made by inspectors. The development plan sets good actions related to strengths and weaknesses identified in the self-assessment report. Responsibilities, timescales, the impact of the action on the learner and the means by which success will be measured, are clearly defined. LTS closely monitors improvement actions and records progress.

AREAS OF LEARNING

Engineering and manufacturing technologies

Grade 2

Contributory areas:	Number of learners	Contributory grade
Motor vehicle		2
Apprenticeships for young people	88	2

58. There are 88 motor vehicle learners, of whom 31 are advanced apprentices and 57 are apprentices. Of these, 46 are on light vehicle maintenance, 24 are on heavy vehicle maintenance, 13 are on motor vehicle body and paint operations, two on motor cycle vehicle maintenance and three are on the motor vehicle parts distribution training programmes. Learners are recruited through advertisements, Connexions, school careers events or are referred by employers. All learners have an initial assessment and a formal interview, at which point LTS staff identify learners' aptitude and additional support needs, as well as their suitability for specific work placements. All learners are in full-time employment with employers across the region for their on-the-job training. The companies range from large franchises to small independent garages. Learners are given one day a week for off-the-job training. Motor vehicle body and paint operations and motor cycle vehicle maintenance learners go to Blackpool and The Fylde College and the rest of the learners study at the LTS training centre. LTS staff visit learners once every nine weeks in the workplace to review their progress and to assess their competence against the requirements of the NVQ at levels 2 or 3. Three of LTS's staff are qualified assessors and three others are working towards the assessor qualification. Two staff are also qualified internal verifiers. Three of the staff have teaching or training qualifications and one is working towards a qualification. College staff are responsible for NVQ assessments in the workplace for those who attend the college.

Motor vehicle

Grade 2

Strengths

- improving retention and achievement rates
- good development of practical skills
- good off-the-job training
- thorough review system
- good monitoring of learners' progress
- good on-demand assessment for most learners

Weaknesses

- weak target-setting for some learners
- poor awareness of equal opportunities by learners
- missed opportunities for assessment for some learners

Achievement and standards

59 At the previous inspection, retention rates were less than 50 per cent for apprentices. Since then, retention and achievement rates have improved significantly. For the 40 apprentices who started during 2003-04, the retention rate is 70 per cent, 55 per cent have already completed the framework and six remain in learning. Of 95 starters in the past three years, 22 have already completed the framework and 55 remain in learning. For these three years, overall retention is 81 per cent.

60. For advanced apprentices, the achievement rates at the previous inspection were satisfactory. Since then, retention and achievement rates have remained stable for the low number of learners recruited. Of the 56 starters in the past three years, a third have already completed the framework and 30 remain in learning. The overall retention rate is 86 per cent.

61. LTS has a good understanding of the reasons for learners leaving early. Most of them leave for better jobs or for medical reasons. Interventions are made to support learners who are at risk of leaving early. The effective links with employers allow early identification of problems. There are good opportunities for progression. Many learners are recruited after working part time for employers during holidays and weekends. Starting with LTS is a natural progression for these learners. Learners who achieve the NVQ at level 2 move on to the level 3 programme. Many previous LTS apprentices now manage garages where current learners are employed.

62. The development of practical skills is good and this is reflected in the improving achievement rates. For most learners, the NVQ at level 2 and key skills are achieved by the end of the second year. Learners carry out an extensive range of activities in their work placements and make good progress towards developing the competences required for the apprenticeship frameworks. Learners are able to work on complex tasks with limited supervision. All learners are placed with experienced technicians during their training. Employers provide ample opportunities for learners to acquire the necessary skills before formal assessment. With difficulties in the recruitment of skilled staff in the area, employers are keen to ensure that learners succeed.

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

LSC funded work-based learning																	
Advanced apprenticeships	2005-06		2004-05		2003-04		2002-03		2001-02		2000-01		1999-00				
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	
Number of starts	14		17		25		17		26	100	33	100	19	100			
Retained*	0		4		14		8		14	54	21	64	10	53			
Successfully completed	0		4		14		8		14	54	21	64	10	53			
Still in learning	14		11		5		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

LSC funded work-based learning																
Apprenticeships	2005-06		2004-05		2003-04		2002-03		2001-02		2000-01		1999-00			
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Number of starts	27		28		40		34		33	100	24	100	23	100		
Retained*	0		0		26		15		16	48	7	29	13	57		
Successfully completed	0		0		22		12		16	48	6	25	12	52		
Still in learning	27		22		6		2		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

63. Off-the-job training is good. Of the three observed sessions, one was outstanding and two were good. LTS staff are knowledgeable about the occupational area and teaching staff have appropriate qualifications. Classroom and workshop training is well planned and clearly identifies learning outcomes for each session. Good use is made of up-to-date technology and learners are engaged in learning. Regular confirmation of understanding is made during sessions. Learners who have additional learning needs are discretely monitored for understanding during the sessions and individual support is offered at the end of each session. Key skills training makes good use of information technology (IT) and learners are progressing well towards the achievement of this qualification. Key skills assignments are aligned to the interests of individual learners. Workshop sessions are well planned and use some good resources. The workshop and classrooms are old but adequate.

64. As identified in the self-assessment report, there is a thorough review system. There are two experienced training officers whose function is to review learners' progress and carry out workplace assessments. LTS has developed excellent paperwork which is used in a nine-week cycle of reviews. In each cycle, the training officer has a tutorial with a learner at the training centre. The first page of the review paperwork identifies progress. NVQ progress is identified as a percentage of achievement for each unit of the qualification. This information is then used at the next workplace review visit. Training officers share the review report with the appropriate member of the employer's staff, sometimes the foreman but more often the owner. Despite the commercial pressures on their time, employers spend significant time discussing experience and assessment needs and grading various aspects of a learner's performance, such as timekeeping and working with others. They are clearly very supportive of the process. Health and safety is checked at each visit. This process has helped a number of employers to improve their approach to health and safety. Training officers set targets for learners to make progress on their NVQ and this is communicated to the employer. The review also ensures learners' pastoral well-being and there are instances where difficulties have been overcome by sensitive intervention by the training officer. On completion of the review, all details are recorded and a copy of the review paperwork is left with the learner and the employer and is maintained centrally by LTS.

65. The review process contributes to the good monitoring of learners' progress, as identified in the self-assessment report. Learners' progress towards completing the framework is monitored effectively using LTS's paperwork and systems, as well as those of the awarding body. Both systems are well linked, clear and informative. All learners have a

record of their progress, and of the outstanding evidence required for each element of the NVQ. This is updated regularly and is used as a basis for reviews. A summary of learners' progress is attached to their toolboxes. An expected percentage completion figure is calculated for each learner and used to identify slow progress. Learners and employers find this helpful and trainers can identify current achievement easily. This information is used at monthly management meetings and learners who are making unsatisfactory progress are highlighted. A new management information system is being developed, which will automate the process.

66. The learners who are assessed by LTS staff have access to a very responsive assessment service. Requests for assessment can be made at very short notice. This enables learners to take the opportunity for observations as specific jobs arise in the workplace. Employers are fully aware of this service and often instigate assessment requests to ensure that learners take advantage of relevant assessment opportunities. In some instances, assessors are able to start an assessment within 30 minutes of a telephone request being made and there are instances of even faster response times. LTS has productive links with a good range of employers. Where assessment opportunities are not available at a learner's workplace, suitable alternative arrangements are made for assessment at another location. Assessment opportunities are planned with learners and employers during the regular reviews or during training sessions at LTS's premises.

67. A comprehensive three-day induction programme takes place at the training centre. Induction includes presentations from external speakers, including advice on drugs awareness and financial matters. Learners have a good recall of the content of the induction. For example, one learner spoke highly of the financial advice that was given by a representative from a local bank. Another recalled the information about LTS's anti-harassment and anti-bullying policies. Learners' knowledge of the different aspects of the induction programme is assessed. Learners have difficulty recalling the information on equality of opportunity. Some of the larger employers also have their own induction programmes. Staff work closely with learners and their employers when preparing individual learning plans. The induction is carried out for groups of learners, but there are no team activities, nor are there activities to enrich the learning at this point or throughout the programme.

68. Initial assessment is satisfactory. Learners are assessed for additional learning support needs. A basic skills test is used to identify learners' literacy and numeracy levels, a diagnostic assessment is carried out to identify their support needs, and an appropriate software package is used to assess their occupational interests, numeracy, abstract reasoning, mechanical reasoning and verbal skills. After initial assessment, additional learning support is provided for learners where necessary. Learners also take a key skills self-assessment to help them understand their own learning needs.

69. For some learners, the targets set during reviews are weak. Learners are given a target of an increased percentage of completed tasks, but insufficient guidance is given on what would help to achieve this target. Achievement dates are given but these are vague. Some targets are easily achievable and are not sufficiently challenging. The targets are not always achievable due to the type of work that becomes available and the targets are insufficiently detailed.

70. Learners have a poor awareness of equal opportunities. They have poor recall of the

information on equality of opportunity which is covered during induction, even the new learners. Learners are asked during review for confirmation that they are being treated fairly, but there is no attempt to reinforce knowledge. Training sessions at LTS do not include equality of opportunity despite the many good learning opportunities which exist.

71. Learners who are on the body and paint operations course miss out on some assessment opportunities. The subcontractor staff responsible for the assessment of this programme, plan a date for an assessment to take place but little consideration is given to the type of task that will be available on that date. Learners who are near the end of the programme find that the highly skilled tasks, or those that are not common, are difficult to obtain and the availability of an assessor is not sufficiently flexible to meet their needs. Some employers have little involvement in the planning of tasks and are unable to react to the demands for the type of work that is needed for the NVQ.

Leadership and management

72. Staff in motor vehicle training are experienced and well qualified and recent recruitment is enhancing this resource. There is an annual appraisal system which includes meaningful targets. There is good staff development, particularly for newer staff. Courses involve technical updating as well as those directly related to their current jobs. Staff on personal development programmes are supported through regular formal meetings, as well as the informal communication of a team operating closely in the training centre. The meetings are minuted in great detail, with actions set out clearly and checked at the next meeting. This contributes significantly to quality improvements of the provision. There are regular formal links with Blackpool and The Fylde College. Internal verification is satisfactory. It involves formative and summative assessment and observation of diverse assessment. Good records are kept. Where weaknesses exist, action plans are made to deal with them. External verifier reports endorse the process. LTS is developing a new database to record all aspects of learners and their progress. Staff use this and IT to effectively monitor all activities and to communicate with colleagues and with learners and employers.

73. Resources at the training centre are satisfactory with some exciting use of new technology. The self-assessment report is thorough and broadly aligns with the inspection findings. Equality of opportunity is introduced at induction in great detail but learners have poor recall of this topic. It is included in reviews, but mostly relates to the health and well-being of the learners, and is not used to extend understanding and awareness.

