

# INSPECTION REPORT

## **Metals Industry Skills and Performance (MetSkill)**

**10 February 2006**



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
- **learn<sup>direct</sup>** 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

## Metals Industry Skills and Performance (MetSkill)

### Contents

#### Summary

Description of the provider	1
Overall effectiveness	1
Key challenges for Metals Industry Skills and Performance (MetSkill)	2
Grades	2
About the inspection	3
Key Findings	3
What learners like about Metals Industry Skills and Performance (MetSkill)	6
What learners think Metals Industry Skills and Performance (MetSkill) could improve	6

#### Detailed inspection findings

Leadership and management	7
Equality of opportunity	8
Quality improvement	9
Engineering and manufacturing technologies	11

## INSPECTION REPORT

### DESCRIPTION OF THE PROVIDER

1. Metals Industry Skills and Performance (MetSkill) is a not-for-profit, limited company which is owned and led by metals sector employers.
2. MetSkill, formerly Steel Training, was founded in 1990 as the sector's strategic skills body and was the national training organisation for the metals industry until March 2002. In July 2005, MetSkill merged with the Science, Engineering, Manufacturing Technologies Alliance as the sector strategy group for the metals industry within the sector skills council.
3. The company works with metals employers to meet their skills development needs. MetSkill recruits and develops apprentices and devises a range of national vocational qualifications (NVQs) in metals processing. Most of these programmes are delivered by subcontractors that are registered with the metals industry's registered provider scheme. MetSkill subcontracts elements of its apprenticeships and training to Brinsworth Training, Chesterfield College, Clearview Training and Consultancy, Rotherham College of Art and Technology, Casting Technology International, Dudley College, Wolverhampton College, Walsall College, Stourbridge College, Sutton Coldfield College, Association of Building Engineers, Willowgreen, Training Suppliers Network and Future Skills. It subcontracts its national contract for adults to Ad-Qual, Avonvale, BTAL, Business Training Solutions, Casting Technology International, Develop UK, Glass and Glazing Federation, Glass Training, In Touch Care, In-Comm, National Windscreens, Performance Through People, Performance Through People International, RAC Windscreens, T.E.S.T., Willowgreen and i2i.
4. MetSkill is managed by a non-executive board of 18 directors, who are employers from the metals industry, and employs 25 full-time staff. The senior management team comprises the managing director, commercial director, Metals Industry Competitive Enterprise (MICE) director and academy manager. They have responsibility for all aspects of the management of the company. The national adult learning manager has responsibility for delivery of the National Employer Service (NES) contract, reporting to the commercial director, and the academy manager has responsibility for quality development and diversity and equality. The MICE team provides direct training to employers in process improvement techniques and manufacturing.
5. There are two operational centres, one in Sheffield and one in West Bromwich, located with several other metals employers' representative organisations. MetSkill has delivered work-based learning for adults for the NES since 2002, work-based learning for young people for South Yorkshire and Black Country Learning and Skills Councils (LSCs) since 1985 and 'train to gain' with the Black Country LSC since May 2005.

### OVERALL EFFECTIVENESS

**Grade 2**

6. **The overall effectiveness of the provision is good.** MetSkill's leadership and management are good, as are the arrangements for quality improvement. The

## METALS INDUSTRY SKILLS AND PERFORMANCE (METSKILL)

arrangements for equality of opportunity are satisfactory. The provision in engineering is good for adults and satisfactory for apprentices.

**7. The inspection team had a high degree of confidence in the reliability of the self-assessment process.** MetSkill's self-assessment report was well written, comprehensive and very accurate. Inspectors gave a higher grade for the adult provision in engineering, and a lower grade for equality of opportunity. The self-assessment process includes the views of learners, employers, subcontractors and MetSkill's staff. MetSkill has a self-assessment strategy which identifies areas for improvement in the process, and ensures that consultation is increasingly inclusive.

**8. The provider has demonstrated that it is in a good position to make improvements.** It has implemented actions from its post-inspection action plan to improve the quality of the provision. The use of management information systems is good, and has helped MetSkill to monitor and communicate with subcontractors much more effectively.

## KEY CHALLENGES FOR METALS INDUSTRY SKILLS AND PERFORMANCE (METSKILL):

- improve and implement the quality of initial advice and guidance to learners, subcontractors and employers
- improve the structure and content of reviews on adult programmes
- improve the identification of literacy, numeracy and language needs for adults
- continue to improve timely delivery of key skills
- further develop promotion of equality and diversity
- improve the rate of progress on both apprenticeship programmes

## 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	
<b>Engineering</b>			
Apprenticeships for young people	108	3	
<b>Manufacturing technologies</b>			
Apprenticeships for young people	58	3	
Employer training pilot	803	2	

## ABOUT THE INSPECTION

9. Six inspectors spent 31 days in Sheffield, West Bromwich, Scunthorpe and Teesside looking at work-based learning for adults and apprenticeship programmes for young people. Three preliminary visits to Teesside and Scunthorpe allowed inspectors to see activities and to meet key members of staff who were not available in the main inspection week. Engineering was the only area of learning inspected. MetSkill also runs provision in business administration, but this contract has a small and diminishing number of learners. Contributory funding grades were used in the inspection to differentiate between the adult provision and the apprenticeship programmes.

Number of inspectors	6
Number of inspection days	31
Number of learners interviewed	78
Number of staff interviewed	26
Number of employers interviewed	32
Number of subcontractors interviewed	24
Number of locations/sites/learning centres visited	36
Number of partners/external agencies interviewed	2
Number of visits	4

## KEY FINDINGS

### Achievements and standards

10. **Almost all adults achieve good results.** Some adults made slow progress, but this has been identified and rectified by the provider. Most adults complete their training.

11. **Learners develop good workplace and personal skills.** They become more confident and achieve positions of responsibility. Many learners do additional training to enhance their skills. Employers recognise the value of this for their workforce.

12. **Advanced apprentices make slow progress.** Approximately half of those who started six years ago are still in learning. Measures are now in place to support these learners, and they are making better progress. Most complete their training.

13. **Achievement of key skills is poor by apprentices.** Arrangements for delivering and integrating key skills into vocational training were unsatisfactory in the past and many apprentices did not complete the full framework. Key skills are now being introduced earlier in the programme.

## The quality of provision

14. **Subcontractors have good arrangements for assessment and verification.** Portfolios are good. Assessors set suitably challenging targets for learners. Subcontractors have good arrangements for assuring the quality of their assessment and verification processes.

15. **Learners receive good support from their trainers and employers.** Employers frequently give learners time off or extra pay to study. Assessors fit their visits around learners' shift patterns and are very accessible. Apprentices arrange and participate in a forum to discuss and resolve issues in the workplace.

16. **Some adults have not been given enough information at the start of their programmes.** Some do not understand why they must take a qualification which is below the level they have already studied at, and the advantages have not been explained to them. They have insufficient information about what their qualification entails. There was no initial assessment at the beginning of their programme, and their needs were not wholly met.

## Leadership and management

17. **MetSkill has very good links with industry to develop provision.** Employers are board members and influence the qualifications and provision in the metals industry. MetSkill works with the metals forum to reach a wide range of employers so that it is representative of the whole sector. Employers understand the need to have a highly skilled workforce, and support MetSkill in introducing training programmes.

18. **MetSkill works with very supportive employers.** Employers understand the qualifications that learners are taking and allow time and money for them to complete their learning. Employers communicate well with MetSkill, and are kept up to date with the requirements of the programmes. They help learners by giving them a wide range of experience in the workplace.

19. **MetSkill works hard to raise the profile of engineering training.** It works closely with four local schools to give pupils work experience at an appropriate level. It also works with employers to show them the benefits of giving pupils work experience. Its marketing materials show images of learners from under-represented groups.

20. **MetSkill manages and monitors its subcontractors well.** Subcontractors submit information at every stage of the learners' progress, and this is analysed by MetSkill. MetSkill intervenes strongly as soon as a potential problem is identified. MetSkill has taken strong action to ensure that its subcontractors are fulfilling their role well.

21. **MetSkill has a detailed and thorough self-assessment process.** Information for the self-assessment report is gathered from a wide range of sources. The self-assessment report is accurate and comprehensive. Actions taken from the self-assessment have raised the quality of provision since the previous inspection.

22. **MetSkill gives insufficient initial advice and guidance.** One subcontractor had too little information on how to deliver key skills effectively within the programme. Learners do not always understand all of the demands of their programmes, and in the past, some have



been placed on inappropriate programmes. Some employers have too little information about the programmes and do not know how best to support learners.

**23. There is insufficient management of literacy, numeracy and language support.**

Support is given when a need is identified, but there is no initial assessment for adult learners, and no other mechanism for identifying where this support is needed. MetSkill has carried out research which shows that there is a strong need for this type of provision for adults, but has not implemented ways of identifying the requirement.

**24. There is insufficient staff training in equality and diversity.** Some members of staff are not confident enough when discussing equality and diversity with learners. There is an adequate general awareness of equality issues, but staff do not have specific knowledge about current legislation and particular issues that affect learners. MetSkill has plans to train its staff in equality and diversity.

## **Leadership and management**

### **Strengths**

- very good links with industry to develop provision
- very supportive employers
- good initiatives to raise the profile of engineering training
- good management and monitoring of subcontractors
- detailed and thorough self-assessment process

### **Weaknesses**

- insufficient initial information, advice and guidance
- insufficient management of literacy, numeracy and language support for adults
- insufficient staff training in equality and diversity

## **Engineering and manufacturing technologies**

### *Strengths*

- good achievement on adult programmes
- good development of workplace and personal skills
- good assessment and verification arrangements by subcontractors
- high levels of support and programme enhancement

### *Weaknesses*

- slow progress for advanced apprentices
- poor achievement rates for key skills by apprentices
- poor induction and information in the early stages for some adults

## **WHAT LEARNERS LIKE ABOUT METALS INDUSTRY SKILLS AND PERFORMANCE (METSKILL):**

- the frequency and flexibility of assessors' visits
- some very enjoyable one-day workshops
- the feeling of achievement at having completed the NVQ
- the overtime payments for off the job parts of the programme
- the good commitment to training from my employer
- being reintroduced to learning after many years
- the ability to manage people more effectively after the adult programme
- getting into employment
- gaining a qualification has boosted my confidence
- working with others

## **WHAT LEARNERS THINK METALS INDUSTRY SKILLS AND PERFORMANCE (METSKILL) COULD IMPROVE:**

- the information given at induction about the NVQ process and the need for portfolio evidence
- consistency of the quality of mentor support
- more learning and less collection of evidence of existing competence
- coverage of key skills

## DETAILED INSPECTION FINDINGS

### LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

**Grade 2**

#### Strengths

- very good links with industry to develop provision
- very supportive employers
- good initiatives to raise the profile of engineering training
- good management and monitoring of subcontractors
- detailed and thorough self-assessment process

#### Weaknesses

- insufficient initial information, advice and guidance
- insufficient management of literacy, numeracy and language support for adults
- insufficient staff training in equality and diversity

25. MetSkill has very good, highly effective links with industry. MetSkill's board represents the metals industries very well, and members develop and shape provision to ensure that the present and future needs of industry are met. MetSkill continues to develop links with small- and medium-sized businesses through the metals forum, which unites the main strands of the metals industry in Britain. Provision is closely linked to the needs of industry, and learners can identify realistic and achievable career routes through the range of qualifications. MetSkill has been instrumental in developing qualifications to meet the particular demands of the workplace, such as the health and safety passport and the leadership development programme, in close consultation with the industry. Currently, some of the major employers have an ageing workforce and wish to attract young people into technical and managerial roles, and this is the main thrust of MetSkill's work. There is also strong emphasis on giving people the right skills for the job. For example, people who are technically very competent but have little managerial experience are being trained to manage teams effectively.

26. MetSkill works with very supportive employers to ensure that learners can achieve their qualifications and progress within their job roles. It ensures that the range of activities available to learners is sufficiently wide to allow career progression as well as the achievement of the qualification. Employers support learners to achieve additional qualifications and to engage in extra-curricular activities for personal development. Employers liaise well with MetSkill's staff and with subcontractors to ensure that the learners' experience is positive, and take advice from MetSkill on working practices.

27. Communication has improved now that MetSkill has restructured its management. There is regular communication between subcontractors, employers and MetSkill. MetSkill has worked very hard to form productive working relationships with employers. Most of the employers have a good understanding of the requirements of the programmes and fully support the learning. They are clear about what they will gain from having a highly trained workforce. Many employers pay their learners overtime so that they can study, and many

## METALS INDUSTRY SKILLS AND PERFORMANCE (METSkill)

give learners time off to work on their qualification. However, some learners who are in close contact with subcontractors are unaware of what MetSkill's role is in their training.

28. Planning is realistic. MetSkill has a good development plan which is driving forward the quality of provision. MetSkill has clear aims and objectives, and works with employers to make provision as relevant as possible to the needs of industry and learners.

29. On some programmes, insufficient initial information and guidance is given to subcontractors, employers and learners to drive forward achievements. For example, one inexperienced subcontractor did not have enough initial information to know how to deliver key skills effectively within the vocational programme. Adults are often on programmes because their employer wants them to gain a qualification. In many cases, there has been insufficient information and guidance given to learners in advance of the programmes to explain why these courses will benefit them. Some learners who already have level 4 qualifications are working towards NVQs at level 3, and do not understand how they will benefit from this. Appropriate explanations of these decisions have not been given. MetSkill is aware of this and is working on ways to improve the situation.

30. There is insufficient management of literacy, numeracy and language support on adult programmes. Support is offered if a need is identified, but there is no initial assessment to determine the need at the start of the programme. MetSkill has researched the extent of potential problems with literacy, numeracy and language and knows that there is a high proportion of adults who could benefit from support. On apprenticeship programmes, initial assessment is carried out by MetSkill and the subcontractors. Few learners have literacy, numeracy or language support needs, but when needs are identified, learners are referred to external agencies for support.

31. Resources are satisfactory. In the workplace, resources are to industry standards. Staff are well qualified for their roles and professional development is given.

### **Equality of opportunity**

### **Contributory grade 3**

32. MetSkill takes good initiatives to raise the profile of engineering training among employers and school leavers. It works closely with eight schools to promote engineering to young people. These schools invite their pupils to apply formally to MetSkill for work experience. A professional interview is held to select the young people, and those who are successful follow up their work experience with a presentation to their peers, which counts towards a qualification in key skills and helps to inform other young people about engineering opportunities. MetSkill works with employers to help them to understand the needs of the young people on work placements, and these employers are very supportive. Apprentices are encouraged to become ambassadors. Those who are fully trained and accredited as ambassadors go in to schools as role models for young people who may be considering a career in engineering. MetSkill celebrates learners' success through awards evenings which are reported in the local press as well as in their own publications. Case studies of learners are prominently displayed and updated to show how successful they have been. For example, a case study of a young apprentice who was earning £13,000 a year has been updated to show that on completion of his qualification his salary was increased to £20,000.

33. MetSkill has identified that some people are under-represented in engineering, and it has set and met targets to deal with this. However, the targets are not based on local data,

and there is no promotion to specific under-represented groups. MetSkill chooses its ambassadors carefully to provide role models for under-represented groups. MetSkill always uses images of its own learners and employers in its marketing literature, and is careful to include images of non-traditional learners to help to attract under-represented groups. MetSkill no longer has links with community groups, but this is an area it wishes to develop. MetSkill makes reasonable adjustment for people with disabilities, but has not shown employers how they can work with people with disabilities.

34. MetSkill has established an apprentices' forum that encourages learners to raise issues on equality and diversity as well as helping them to develop good interpersonal skills. MetSkill intervenes on behalf of learners if they encounter a problem related to equality. In one case, the relationship with an employer who consistently bullied learners was terminated. MetSkill has an established complaints procedure and most complaints are dealt with at an early stage of the procedure. Learners show a satisfactory understanding of their rights and responsibilities.

35. MetSkill has a clear equal opportunities policy and strategy. It ensures that subcontractors understand and conform to its policy on equality. Subcontractors are responsible for monitoring equality in the workplace, and MetSkill monitors the subcontractors' activities in this field. MetSkill meets its obligations under the Race Relations (Amendment) Act 2000 and the Special Educational and Disability Act 2001. MetSkill collects and analyses data on the profile of its learners, and has compared the performance of learners from under-represented groups with those from more traditional groups. Although the numbers are small, this analysis indicates that people from under-represented groups perform better than others.

36. Some of the staff have been trained in equality and diversity, but most have not. This training is planned for the future. MetSkill has identified that at present some staff have an incomplete understanding of specific equality and diversity issues, and feel insecure about broaching the subject with learners. Although reviews are planned to pick up on equality themes introduced in induction and to expand on them, staff do not always have the confidence to do this well.

## **Quality improvement**

## **Contributory grade 2**

37. MetSkill manages and monitors its subcontractors well. Detailed and thorough service level agreements with each subcontractor are clearly understood by all parties, and the subcontractors work well to fulfil their obligations. MetSkill has frequent, productive meetings with subcontractors to discuss programme performance, operational issues and actions that need to be dealt with. Monitoring and auditing arrangements cover all aspects of the training process to ensure the quality of provision is maintained. Subcontractors supply details of assessment records, progress reviews, observations of training sessions, learners' feedback and qualification achievements to MetSkill monthly. MetSkill analyses this information and intervenes when problems are identified. It also implements improvement strategies with subcontractors where appropriate. MetSkill samples subcontractor activity to ensure that the training programmes are being delivered to the required standard. These procedures are now well established and ensure that concerns are identified at an early stage and promptly resolved.

38. Where MetSkill manages and delivers training programmes directly, staff understand and implement quality procedures. Monitoring arrangements in the form of observations

of training, assessment and progress reviews standardise practice. Feedback from learners and employers helps to identify specific or general concerns, and discussions take place to consider appropriate action to deal with these problems.

39. Self-assessment procedures are detailed and thorough. Self-assessment within the company is part of an ongoing quality process. Analysis of all aspects of the training programme has improved the provision for the learners, and they report better arrangements for meeting targets and a more focused approach to training. At the previous inspection, there was insufficient use of management data to bring about improvements, and the quality systems were not fully developed, but these issues have been resolved successfully. The company produced its most recent self-assessment report in November 2005. All subcontractors, learners, staff and employers contributed to this process. The report is critical, accurate and judgemental, and the accompanying development plan focuses on many of the issues identified in the inspection.

40. Retention and achievement data is now more effectively analysed to form action plans which are designed to raise the standard of provision. Targets are now set for achievement and development and this allows the organisation to measure progress as part of a strategy of continuous improvement. Learners' progress is recorded and monitored, and the monitoring of the assessment process is continuous and systematic. Internal verification systems and practices are effective. The process involves effective sampling, observation and recording strategies that are consistently applied across all subcontractors and training activity.

## AREAS OF LEARNING

### Engineering and manufacturing technologies

Grade 2

Contributory areas:	Number of learners	Contributory grade
<b>Engineering</b> Apprenticeships for young people	108	3
<b>Manufacturing technologies</b> Apprenticeships for young people	58	3
Employer training pilot	803	2

41. MetSkill trains 166 employed apprentices in engineering and manufacturing. In the Black Country, there are 14 apprentices and 27 advanced apprentices on engineering programmes and 12 apprentices and three advanced apprentices on manufacturing programmes. In South Yorkshire, there are 67 advanced apprentices on engineering programmes, and 21 apprentices and 22 advanced apprentices on manufacturing programmes. Learners take a range of courses including mechanical and electrical engineering, metal processing and allied operations, laboratory and associated technical activities. Adult programmes are subcontracted to 15 providers. Two thousand seven hundred and ninety-four learners have started on programmes since 2002. MetSkill has designed the two programmes to meet the needs of the metal industry, such as the NVQ at level 2 for team leaders and level 3 for shift leaders. Programmes are made up of between four and eight one-day off-the-job training workshops, on-the-job assessment, and usually a work-based project.

42. There are four full-time apprentice co-ordinators and 10 part-time associate assessors for the apprenticeship programmes. All have vocational and training qualifications, and most have qualifications in occupational safety. Learners are recruited through Connexions, careers conventions, school open evenings, and by local advertising. Off-the-job training is subcontracted to local colleges or other training providers. In some cases the whole apprenticeship framework is subcontracted to other training providers and some learners are given their background knowledge training in the workplace. Most of the key skills training and assessment is subcontracted to specialist key skills providers or to other training providers. Learners are encouraged to take additional qualifications.

#### *Strengths*

- good achievement on adult programmes
- good development of workplace and personal skills
- good assessment and verification arrangements by subcontractors
- high levels of support and programme enhancement

#### *Weaknesses*

- slow progress for advanced apprentices
- poor achievement rates for key skills by apprentices
- poor induction and information in the early stages for some adults



## Achievement and standards

43. Achievement rates on almost all adult programmes are very high at between 67 per cent and 95 per cent. However, one of the subcontractors who has learners with a single large employer has progressed slowly and has a current achievement rate of less than 20 per cent. Most of the learners with this subcontractor are still in learning, and, following the appointment of a new manager, are now making very good progress. Learners who had lost motivation have been attracted back on to their programmes. Retention over three years on adult programmes is high at 88 per cent. The overall achievement rate over three years is 50 per cent. New quality improvement measures have helped the subcontractor improve the provision.

44. Apprentices' personal and workplace skills are well developed. They achieve a wide range of additional qualifications. They currently make good progress and gain confidence and self-esteem and they quickly become essential members of their team in the workplace. The standard of training is good, and employers are fully involved in the training, particularly of advanced apprentices. Established workplace quality assurance procedures ensure that skills and work methods are of a high standard with employers. These skills are further supported by the good individual coaching provided by MetSkill and their subcontractors' assessors and training officers. Employers appreciate the range and quality of work that learners can carry out, often with little supervision. Many learners quickly achieve positions of responsibility. One subcontractor has been identified as a centre of excellence. Apprentices are well motivated, are keen to learn, and are very positive about their training.

45. Advanced apprentices are making slow progress towards their framework. In 2000-01, of the 21 advanced engineering apprentices, 43 per cent are still in learning. For 2001-02, 58 per cent of the advanced engineering apprentices are still in learning. MetSkill has recognised this weakness. Retention rates for these intakes were 87 per cent and 68 per cent, respectively.

46. Apprentices' achievement of key skills is poor in the Black Country and South Yorkshire. For 2001-02, 2002-03 and 2003-04, key skills achievement rates are 36 per cent, 22 per cent and 15 per cent, with 23 per cent of the 2003-04 apprentices still in learning. This has seriously affected the framework achievement rates. MetSkill now introduces key skills delivery and assessment earlier into learners' programmes. Retention for 2003-04 was 61 per cent.

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		1998-99	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Number of starts	22		45		51		20		19	100	24	100	6	100	2	100
Retained*	0		0		3		7		13	68	20	83	4	67	1	50
Successfully completed	0		0		3		4		3	16	7	29	1	17	0	0
Still in learning	22		36		33		6		11	58	10	42	1	17	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	6		46		38	100	7	100	5	100	4	100	3	100		
Retained*	0		3		6	16	0	0	1	20	1	25	3	100		
Successfully completed	0		0		6	16	0	0	1	20	1	25	2	67		
Still in learning	6		33		8	21	0	0	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																
Employer training pilot	2005-06		2004-05		2003-04		2002-03									
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Number of starts	50		395	100	1,487	100	862	100								
Retained*	0		305	77	1,347	91	760	88								
Successfully completed	0		117	30	680	46	567	66								
Still in learning	44		162	41	581	39	16	2								

\*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

47. There is good assessment and verification by MetSkill's subcontractors. Assessors make regular assessment visits and assessments are effectively planned with the learners. They have a clear understanding of when and how they will be assessed. Assessors ensure that visits take into account shift patterns and weekend work activities. Assessment methods are diverse and include direct observation of activities in the workplace. Post-assessment target-setting is suitably challenging. Learners' portfolios are to a good standard and contain a high proportion of work evidence. They are clearly referenced and authenticated with witness testimonies. Subcontractors' verification processes are effective. An internal verifier observes the assessors and gives detailed feedback. Subcontractors keep detailed records of the internal verification process and many hold regular standardisation meetings.

48. The standard of teaching and training is satisfactory. The planning of learning sessions is good. Key skills teaching is carried out mainly by subcontractors, either on a weekly basis or within subcontractors' full-time delivery of off-the-job training. The information provided is clear and concise, and supporting documents are good. For example, during one communications lesson on the production of a summarised report, several examples of different types of report on health and safety in the workplace were given to the learners. Good records are kept on assessors' feedback sheets. Workplace supervisors train learners in a wide range of engineering disciplines to suit the requirements of their NVQ. Most learners develop a range of additional specialist skills with their employers, including manual handling and safe slinging practices.

49. Adult programmes are effective in raising the leadership skills of team leaders in the metal industry. The structure and content are closely matched to the needs of the industry,

and they are tailored to meet the needs of individual companies. Employers regard the programmes as central to the development of their team leaders. Work-based projects often contribute to departmental and business improvement.

50. Employers give good support to adult learners. The learners are given time during their working day to attend off-the-job training workshops and to collect evidence for their portfolios. The subcontractors are very flexible in arranging for assessors to meet with the learners in the workplace, so that there is minimum disruption to work patterns. Apprentices also receive good support and many opportunities to enhance their apprenticeship programme. MetSkill encourages apprentices to join a forum to discuss the strengths and weaknesses of their programmes and to resolve issues raised by learners. This forum has also organised a range of events to build and improve communications between the two main apprenticeship centres in the Black Country and South Yorkshire. Many employers allow apprentices time to work on assignments and portfolios in the workplace and encourage apprentices to attend additional training, for instance in metals awareness, manual handling and safe use of abrasive wheels. In the Black Country, effective pastoral support is given at reviews and learners appreciate the opportunity to deal with issues that may form a barrier to their learning.

51. MetSkill has satisfactory arrangements to meet the support needs of apprentices relating to key skills. Their key skills levels are assessed at interview and the results of this assessment are recorded on individual learning plans. Where appropriate, the information is passed on to subcontractors. One learner was identified as being dyslexic, and arrangements were made to support the learner in key skills examinations, which the learner subsequently passed. In many cases, subcontractors carry out supplementary tests, particularly in key skills, to assess learners' needs. However, there is no formal system for diagnosing adult learners' literacy, numeracy and language support needs. Learners receive good support from assessors who make regular visits to the workplace. Learners value the support received during assignments and assessments in the workplace. Learners speak highly of the open and approachable style of assessors.

52. MetSkill provides a satisfactory induction programme for apprentices. New apprentices are given a range of information which includes terms and conditions and complaints and grievance procedures. Staff reinforce the apprentices' understanding of health and safety and equal opportunities, and this is further discussed during reviews and assessments. Learners benefit from the induction process and are well informed about the structure and procedures involved in achieving their chosen qualification.

53. Employers, subcontractors and MetSkill have a satisfactory range of resources to support learners. Staff help learners to develop their personal effectiveness skills. Assessors and verifiers are appropriately qualified and experienced. Most of the machinery and equipment used for work activities and on-the-job training is good. Training rooms for key skills are equipped to a satisfactory level, and industry standard computers are used to support learners' information technology development.

54. Programmes are appropriate for learners' and employers' needs. Most learners are aware of the progression routes available to them, particularly the possibility of moving from level 2 qualifications to those at level 3 and to higher national certificates. The qualifications being worked towards are appropriate. Adult learners welcome the opportunity to achieve nationally recognised qualifications.

55. Subcontractors' target-setting and action-planning for learners is satisfactory. Subcontractors record targets on assessment review forms that are linked to learning goals. Learners receive guidance on what they need to do to improve their skills. While some targets are not detailed, most have adequate deadlines, and include short-term objectives. Apprentices' reviews, which are carried out by MetSkill's training co-ordinators, do not challenge learners by setting targets to improve their performance. Workplace supervisors are normally present at the reviews, and supervisors, employers and learners receive a copy of the review paperwork. Some adult learners do not receive formal progress reviews.

56. Most of the adult learners are placed with one large employer and they have had a poor induction and insufficient programme information. There is no initial assessment of their individual needs. All team leaders take the same programme even if they already have a higher-level qualification. Some learners left their programme early, and others have been disappointed with the experience. These factors slowed initial progress on programme by several months. The subcontractor has worked with MetSkill to deal with this, and a new manager has produced better initial information for adults. All other subcontractors have provided good or satisfactory inductions.

### **Leadership and management**

57. There is good communication within MetSkill and with employers. Staff meetings are held every four weeks. Staff are aware of their roles and responsibilities and are well motivated and committed to their roles. MetSkill's staff or subcontractors' staff visit learners at least every month in the workplace, and in most cases involve the employer in the review process. Subcontractors keep employers informed of learners' progress. Employers speak highly of MetSkill and its staff. Planning of the apprenticeship programme is satisfactory. Targets for framework completion are set and reviewed at management meetings. The management of the internal verification system by subcontractors is good. Equality of opportunity is discussed at learners' reviews, and learners demonstrate a satisfactory understanding of equality and diversity. Questionnaires are used to record and evaluate the learners' experience. There is satisfactory use of resources throughout the training. Staff development is satisfactory with examples such as health and safety and assessor awards being available.

58. For adult learners, communication between MetSkill, subcontractors and employers is excellent. There are formal monthly meetings between each subcontractor and the major employers, and quarterly meetings also involve MetSkill. There are frequent informal communications. Problems are rare and are quickly resolved. Subcontractors give MetSkill and the employers detailed performance information on a regular basis.

59. Assessment and internal verification are very good. Assessors and verifiers are given development opportunities even if they are not directly employed by the provider. Assessors and internal verifiers on adult programmes attend regular full-day standardisation meetings which include development activities.

60. The engineering self-assessment report was accurate and recognised most of the strengths and weaknesses reported by inspectors.

