

INSPECTION REPORT

Poultec Training Limited

25 May 2006



ADULT LEARNING
INSPECTORATE



Estyn

Arolygiaeth Ei Mawrhydi Dros Addysg
A Hyfforddiant yng Nghymru
Her Majesty's Inspectorate
For Education and Training in Wales

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**direct 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

Poultec Training Limited

Contents

Summary

Description of the provider	1
Overall effectiveness	1
Key challenges for Poultec Training Limited	2
Grades	2
About the inspection	3
Key Findings	3
What learners like about Poultec Training Limited	7
What learners think Poultec Training Limited could improve	7

Detailed inspection findings

Leadership and management	8
Equality of opportunity	9
Quality improvement	10
Engineering and manufacturing technologies	12

INSPECTION REPORT

DESCRIPTION OF THE PROVIDER

1. Poultec Training Limited (PTL) is a private limited company which was established in 1999, and provides training for the food/poultry industry. It provides work-based learning for young people in agriculture, horticulture and animal care, engineering and manufacturing technologies and business administration and law. The provider also contracted for level 2 national vocational qualification (NVQ) training under the employer training pilot (ETP) scheme, which is now Train to Gain. Both programmes are funded by the Norfolk Learning and Skills Council (LSC). Other training is co-financed by the European Social Fund (ESF). PTL operates from purpose-built administrative and training premises in Mattishall near Dereham in Norfolk, which were completed in August 2003. PTL, in partnership with Otley College, has gained Centre of Vocational Excellence (CoVE) status in food technology.

2. PTL's managing director is supported by a company secretary and a training director. There are programme managers for the agriculture, horticulture and animal care, and business administration and law programmes. The manufacturing technologies programme is managed directly by the training director. There are seven vocational or key skills assessors and a work-based monitoring officer. PTL has one literacy, numeracy and language skills tutor and is in the process of recruiting another. The provider also has a regional network manager, and accounts and administrative staff.

OVERALL EFFECTIVENESS

Grade 2

3. **The overall effectiveness of the provision is good.** The provision in engineering and manufacturing technologies is good. Leadership and management are good. Equality of opportunity and quality improvement are satisfactory. Inspectors sampled evidence from the other two areas of learning offered by the provider and, although they were not graded, indications are that the provision in those areas is also at least satisfactory.

4. **The inspection team had some confidence in the reliability of the self-assessment process.** The self-assessment report, produced in January 2006, was sufficiently detailed. The grades in the report closely matched those given by inspectors, but some of the strengths identified were no more than normal practice, and not enough of the weaknesses were identified.

5. **The provider has demonstrated that it is in a good position to make improvements.** It has taken effective actions to overcome key weaknesses identified at the previous inspection and through its well-established self-assessment process. This is reflected in the improved grades. The excellent new facilities and planned developments demonstrate a commitment to increasing the capacity and quality of the provision.

KEY CHALLENGES FOR POULTEC TRAINING LIMITED:

- introduce greater flexibility to enable learners to have more influence on their programmes
- continue to improve the achievement and completion rates for learners
- develop a greater understanding of equality of opportunity in staff, learners and stakeholders
- introduce more formal and systematic arrangements for quality improvement
- fully exploit the new facilities

GRADES

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

Grades awarded at inspection

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

Engineering and manufacturing technologies			2
Contributory areas:	Number of learners	Contributory grade	
<i>Manufacturing technologies</i>		2	
Apprenticeships for young people	49	2	
Other government-funded provision	7	2	
Train to Gain	25	2	

ABOUT THE INSPECTION

6. Only one of the three areas of learning offered by the provider was inspected. This was the core business area of engineering and manufacturing technologies. The planned inspection of agriculture, horticulture and animal care could not take place because of an outbreak of avian flu in the area. As this was a cycle 2 inspection, the third area, business administration and law was not inspected. Inspectors did sample evidence from both these areas to use in the leadership and management report.

Number of inspectors	3
Number of inspection days	12
Number of learners interviewed	13
Number of staff interviewed	19
Number of employers interviewed	7
Number of locations/sites/learning centres visited	7
Number of visits	1

KEY FINDINGS

Achievements and standards

7. **Success rates for apprenticeship frameworks in manufacturing technologies are high** in comparison with the national averages for the qualifications and industry sectors. The overall framework completion rate was 62 per cent in 2003-04. This dropped to 55 per cent in 2004-05, but is now improving, at 59 per cent for the current year. The achievement rate on the ETP scheme is also good to date. Twenty-two per cent of those who began training have achieved their NVQ and 68 per cent are still in training. All the ESF-funded learners are still in training. The pass rates for key skills tests are very good at 86 per cent.

The quality of provision

Grades given to learning sessions

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

8. **Employers are committed and involved in training.** They focus on the benefits of structured training to learners and the business. Workplaces conform to very good operational standards and provide a safe working environment for learners. On-the-job training is well planned and recorded. Work-based trainers and assessors work effectively with PTL's staff in the interests of the learners, and to improve the quality of the learning experience. Meaningful exchanges of information and valuable discussions relating to learners' progress are prominent features of the working relationship.

9. **Learners are supported well.** Working relationships and levels of communication among PTL's staff, employers and learners are very good. Regular staff visits are arranged to meet learner's needs and company shift patterns, including weekends and nights. Staff are responsive to learners' wide-ranging learning and pastoral needs. Very good levels of support are provided to learners with poor literacy and numeracy skills. Laptop computers and colour printers are used effectively to support learning. Many of the test papers for short courses are available in a range of languages. Additional training is available for learners with particularly poor literacy and numeracy skills.

10. **Key skills training is used and integrated well in apprenticeship programmes.** Most of the key skills training takes place off-the-job in individual or small-group sessions. Workbooks and computer-produced charts relate well to industry and production situations which learners clearly understand. Staff link key skills training to the NVQ syllabus, reinforcing the relevance of key skills training.

11. **The feedback provided to learners is inadequate.** They do not receive sufficient information about the quality of tasks that they have completed, or the progress they have made. The outcomes of the progress review process are not helpful to learners. **The action-planning, which is based on feedback from visits and quarterly reviews, is poor.**

12. **Learners do not fully understand how the parts of the programme relate to one another, or how they may improve their rate of progress through the programme.** Some learners are not aware of their completion dates for the various parts of the framework.

Leadership and management

13. **The provider actively establishes and maintains productive partnership** arrangements at a variety of levels. PTL is active in learning partnerships and provider networks at regional, county and local levels. It has gained CoVE status in partnership with Otley College and is in a partnership consortium that recently bid for the new Train to Gain contract. The provider works closely with employers in the industry.

14. **Staff development is good.** PTL supports its staff through training for assessor, verifier and teaching qualifications, and has promoted a number of staff to management positions.

15. **The provider has developed successful strategies to widen participation** and attracts learners from groups who are not usually attracted to learning. The ETP scheme allows agricultural and manufacturing employees with no qualifications to achieve an NVQ at level 2. These learners represent a range of age groups. One ESF project has been used to allow 53 learners to access a range of level 3 NVQs. Another ESF project was used to develop PTL's skills for life team which is implementing the government's strategy on training in literacy, numeracy and the use of language. The purpose-built premises provide good access for people with restricted mobility, and good amenities in a deprived area of Norfolk.

16. **PTL has taken effective actions to resolve identified weaknesses.** All the weaknesses identified at the 2002 inspection have been resolved and those aspects of the provision are now at least satisfactory. The self-assessment process is well established. Weaknesses identified in successive self-assessment reports have been accounted for comprehensively in the associated action plans.

17. Internal verification arrangements are satisfactory. Internal verifiers are appropriately qualified and vocationally competent. They take samples to cover NVQ and key skills assessments by all assessors. All portfolios are checked before they are sent for certification.

18. **PTL does not provide sufficient equal opportunities training or reinforcement of such training.** Learners are issued with the provider's equal opportunities policy at induction, but the policy is not up to date. No separate policies or procedures exist for topics such as bullying and harassment, diversity or complaints. During the progress review process, PTL's staff do not explore or test learners' awareness and understanding of equality of opportunity adequately enough. Staff have not had sufficient training and development to ensure that they improve their own awareness and understanding, and can develop learners appropriately.

19. **The provider does not have sufficient arrangements to formally monitor the quality of each aspect of the provision, or to evaluate measures taken to improve these aspects.** The processes for checking the extent to which those procedures recorded in the staff procedures manual are carried out, are not documented. When the informal arrangements which exist identify a weakness and actions are introduced to resolve it, there is not enough subsequent evaluation of the effectiveness of these actions.

20. **The system for the observation of teaching and learning is incomplete.** Three senior members of staff observe teaching and learning sessions. They give tutors verbal and written feedback with action points and target dates for completion. The outcomes of the actions are not recorded. Learning sessions are not graded, and the observers have not received suitable training. There are no formal arrangements for moderation or an overall observation plan.

Leadership and management

Strengths

- active partnership working
- good staff development
- successful strategies to widen participation
- successful actions to resolve identified weaknesses

Weaknesses

- insufficient equal opportunities training and reinforcement of such training
- insufficient formal quality monitoring and evaluation
- incomplete system for observation of teaching and learning

Engineering and manufacturing technologies

Manufacturing technologies

Strengths

- high success rates
- good levels of employer commitment and involvement in training
- good support for learners
- good use and integration of key skills training

Weaknesses

- poor feedback for learners
- poor action-planning for learners
- insufficient understanding of programme by learners

WHAT LEARNERS LIKE ABOUT POULTEC TRAINING LIMITED:

- 'assessors are really good to get on with'
- 'assessors do all the writing for me'
- key skills assignments are related to actual jobs
- 'friendly assessors who want to help'
- 'being observed and explaining the job on the line'
- 'support has been good'
- 'if I'm stuck I can phone or e-mail for feedback'

WHAT LEARNERS THINK POULTEC TRAINING LIMITED COULD IMPROVE:

- the support available for learners for whom English is an additional language
- the questions - they should be clearer and more specific
- communication could sometimes be better

DETAILED INSPECTION FINDINGS

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

Grade 2

Strengths

- active partnership working
- good staff development
- successful strategies to widen participation
- successful actions to resolve identified weaknesses

Weaknesses

- insufficient equal opportunities training and reinforcement of such training
- insufficient formal quality monitoring and evaluation
- incomplete system for observation of teaching and learning

21. The provider is active in establishing and maintaining productive partnership arrangements at a variety of levels. Through its partnership with Otley College it has gained CoVE status and funding to contribute to the development of its site. The CoVE exchanges ideas and shares good practice with food production CoVEs elsewhere in the country. The excellent facilities in the new premises are used by other local training providers and community organisations. Senior staff are active in regional, county and local learning partnerships and with work-based learning providers. The provider's small graphics department offers its services as a creative enterprise to employers and other companies. The provider's staff maintain good working relationships with employers, and learners receive co-ordinated on- and off-the-job training, and their line managers' support for the training process.

22. PTL's staff development is good. Staff training needs are identified through the well-established annual appraisal system and through the identification of skills gaps in the business. Staff receive encouragement and support from senior management to obtain qualifications that are relevant to their job roles and/or their longer-term personal development. Several members of staff have changed roles and been given greater responsibility within PTL. One of the provider's ex-apprentices has been appointed as office supervisor with an additional initial advice and guidance role. Some assessors have been promoted to programme managers, including one who is now also the CoVE manager.

23. Communications are satisfactory. Assessors can keep in touch with the provider while visiting their learners. The provider's staff make extensive use of e-mails to keep in touch with each other, and with employers and learners. Assessors work from the provider's premises, where an open plan hot-desking system also helps informal and regular communications, within programme teams and across areas of learning. Regular and frequent team and all-staff meetings are held, which help in sharing information among senior management and all levels of staff.

24. PTL's strategic direction is clear. The senior management team has a clear objective,

which it shares satisfactorily with the rest of the staff through the business and development plans. The new premises have been well designed and are fit for purpose. They will be added to when the next phase of the development is fitted out. A third phase development, and space for additional activities are already planned. At an operational level the management structure is relatively flat and considerable responsibility is delegated to junior managers. The senior management team has an open and approachable management style. The provider is adept at identifying and obtaining additional funding.

Equality of opportunity

Contributory grade 3

25. PTL has developed successful strategies to widen participation and attract learners from groups that are not usually attracted to learning. The provider uses various funding streams effectively to encourage different groups of people to become learners or continue in learning. The ETP scheme allows agricultural and manufacturing employees with no qualifications to achieve an NVQ at level 2. These learners represent a range of age groups. Twenty per cent of them are over 45 years of age. An ESF project has been used to allow 53 learners to access a range of level 3 NVQs. Another ESF project was used to develop PTL's skills for life team. Funding is being sought in order to offer literacy and numeracy qualifications to young people. PTL's new training centre provides a wide range of facilities to learners and employers in one on the most deprived rural areas of Norfolk. In addition to a children's nursery, a new food centre of excellence is in the final stages of development and all the buildings are accessible to people with disabilities.

26. PTL is part of an eastern region food initiative which promotes the food and drink industry in the region. This is raising young people's and adults' awareness of careers and development opportunities in the industry. Activities include schools careers events, job fairs and workshops on issues such as the international workforce in the sector. There is considerable awareness of cultural diversity and language barriers in the food industry. Some short-course training materials have been translated into Portuguese and Lithuanian. The provider annually researches and analyses profiles of employers' workforces, which includes workers' countries of origin. The proportions of PTL's profile of learners are representative of the industry's averages, with approximately 20 per cent of learners from countries other than Britain. The provider analyses levels of participation by different groups of learners, but does not analyse the success rates of different groups in order to identify trends or areas for improvement.

27. PTL does not provide sufficient equal opportunities training or reinforcement of such training. Learners are issued with the provider's equal opportunities policy at induction and assessors discuss this with them. The policy is not up to date and does not cover the current legislation or other aspects adequately enough. No separate policies or procedures exist for bullying and harassment, diversity or complaints. Questions developed for use during the progress review process do not explore or test learners' awareness and understanding of equality of opportunity adequately. No record is kept of the questions asked, or the responses given, to ensure that different questions are used at each progress review to broaden learners' knowledge. Staff have not had sufficient training and development to ensure that they improve their own awareness and understanding, and are able to develop that of the learners. The learning resource centre does not have enough reference materials or information to improve staff's and learners' awareness of their rights and responsibilities. Developing equality of opportunity and diversity is one of PTL's priorities and a nominated person is researching materials to develop training programmes for staff, stakeholders and learners.

Quality improvement

Contributory grade 3

28. PTL has taken successful actions to resolve identified weaknesses. All the weaknesses identified at the inspection in 2002 have been resolved and those aspects of the provision are now at least satisfactory. The self-assessment process is well established. Weaknesses identified in successive self-assessment reports have been dealt with comprehensively in the associated action plans. These contain appropriate required actions, allocated responsibilities, timescales, and review and monitoring stage details. The plans also include success indicators, some of which are not easily measurable. The identified weaknesses are reviewed regularly and either considered resolved or carried forward to the next plan, depending on perceived progress. The provider's staff also react effectively to deal with apparent weaknesses identified by employers or other stakeholders.

29. Staff involvement in the self-assessment process is satisfactory. Directors, programme managers, assessors and support staff contribute their views and are also involved in regular reviews of the most recent self-assessment report. Feedback from learners and employers is collected and analysed satisfactorily and used in the self-assessment process. Survey questionnaires are designed to reflect the differences in the various aspects of the provision. PTL's management information system produces data about learners' achievements, but there is no trend analysis of the data.

30. The latest versions of the self-assessment report and the associated action plan were produced in January 2006. The action plan includes appropriate actions to maintain the provider's strengths and resolve the weaknesses identified in the report. However, much of the report is descriptive and, although a number of the strengths and weaknesses identified in the report were also found by inspectors, some of the strengths claimed were normal practice and inspectors identified some additional weaknesses.

31. Internal verification arrangements are satisfactory. Internal verifiers hold appropriate qualifications and are vocationally competent. The verifiers conduct formative verifications on an appropriately sized sample of NVQ and key skills assessments, which cover the work of all assessors. All completed portfolios are verified before they are sent for certification.

32. The provider has a quality assurance manager, who monitors a number of aspects of the provision satisfactorily. Other managers are involved in quality assurance through their line management activities. Exit reviews are conducted for leavers by each department. PTL has a staff procedures manual in which the various procedures required to operate the training programmes are documented satisfactorily. The planned timescales for the main elements of the quality improvement cycle are shown in simplified calendar form in the provider's 2006-07 development plan. However, the provider does not have enough arrangements to formally monitor the quality of each aspect of the provision and evaluate the measures taken to improve them. The processes for checking how well these procedures are carried out are not documented. When the existing informal arrangements identify a weakness and actions are introduced to resolve them, the effect of these actions is not evaluated.

33. The system for observation of teaching and learning is incomplete. Three senior members of staff observe teaching and learning sessions, and then give tutors verbal and written feedback with action points and target dates for completion. However, it is not recorded whether actions are completed. Learning sessions are not graded, the observers have not received suitable training, and there are no formal arrangements for moderation

or overall observation plans. The records of formative observations of staff who are working towards teaching qualifications are shared with the provider. Trainers observe their peers and learn from the experience, offering constructive criticism. However, these observations are not planned systematically and the results not formally recorded.

AREAS OF LEARNING

Engineering and manufacturing technologies

Grade 2

Contributory areas:	Number of learners	Contributory grade
Manufacturing technologies		2
Apprenticeships for young people	49	2
Other government-funded provision	7	2
Train to Gain	25	2

34. There are 81 employed learners. Forty-nine are on apprenticeships for young people programmes, of whom 28 are on the food and drink manufacturing operations programme and 21 are apprentices on the meat and poultry processing programme. Twenty-five learners are on an ETP programme, of whom 17 are working for an NVQ at level 2 in food and drink manufacturing operations and eight are on a level 2 NVQ programme in meat and poultry processing. Seven learners are on other government-funded programmes, working towards an NVQ at level 3 in food and drink manufacturing operations. Learners are employed by five companies in Norfolk.

35. Most of the training and assessment for the NVQ and key skills is carried out on the job. There is a team of three full-time assessors and two work-based assessors. Off-the-job training includes a foundation certificate in food hygiene, a foundation certificate in health and safety, and other appropriate short courses. These courses are delivered either in the workplace or at the provider's new training centre. Learners are visited in the workplace at least once each month and their progress is reviewed every three months. The provision forms part of a collaborative CoVE with Otley College, which is in its second year of operation.

Manufacturing technologies

Strengths

- high success rates
- good levels of employer commitment and involvement in training
- good support for learners
- good use and integration of key skills training

Weaknesses

- poor feedback for learners
- poor action-planning for learners
- insufficient understanding of programme by learners

Achievement and standards

36. Success rates for apprenticeship frameworks are high in comparison with the national averages for the qualifications and industry sectors. The overall framework completion rate

was 62 per cent in 2003-04. This dropped to 55 per cent in 2004-05 and is now improving at 59 per cent for the current year. The achievement rate on the ETP scheme is also good to date. Twenty-two per cent of those who began training have achieved their NVQ and 68 per cent are still in training. All the ESF learners are still in training. All success rates are higher than the national averages for the relevant qualifications and industry sectors. The pass rates for key skills tests are very good at 86 per cent. A very high proportion of learners have additional learning needs, and 80 per cent of apprentices have been identified as needing additional support. Most apprentices do not complete their programmes within the expected timescale and there are some delays in programme delivery. Difficulties have been experienced in arranging access for learners to the short courses requirements of the apprenticeship frameworks.

37. Learners develop a satisfactory range of skills during their apprenticeship programmes. Many develop a high level of confidence in their jobs. Several learners have progressed from a level 2 NVQ to a level 3 NVQ, and a few have become work-based assessors. Many level 2 NVQ learners have been promoted and given additional responsibilities in the workplace.

38. The standard of learners' NVQ portfolios is at least satisfactory overall, and there are some interesting project-based activities which provide individuality to otherwise prescribed and predetermined assessments. Not enough use is made of evidence from employers' on-the-job training, which is assessed by qualified trainers or competent production staff.

Programme	End Year	Success Rate	No, of learners	Provider NVQ Rate	National NVQ Rate	Provider framework rate	National framework rate
Apprenticeships	2003-04	overall	71	62	48	62	32
		timely	81	25	22	25	13
	2004-05	overall	69	55	52	55	41
		timely	72	0	0	0	0
NVQ training for young	2004-05	overall	3	0	57	0	0
		timely	3	0	37	0	0
Adult training (long courses)	2005-06	overall	10	80		0	
		timely	35	23		0	

For details of how to calculate overall and timely success rates please refer to the "Quality Improvement Pack" (available from the Learning and Skills Council's website: www.lsc.gov.uk).

The quality of provision

39. Employers' commitment and involvement in training are good. They focus on the benefits of structured training to learners and the business. Workplaces conform to high operational standards and provide a safe working environment for learners. On-the-job training is well planned and recorded. These records, together with workplace procedures, are used by the NVQ assessors in learners' individual learning plans and to plan assessments. Employers monitor the performance of the provision informally and express high levels of satisfaction with staff and services. PTL's training records log the

achievements of learners, and employers routinely promote and acknowledge successes. Work-based trainers and assessors work effectively with PTL's staff to improve the quality of the learning experience. Meaningful exchanges of information and valuable discussions relating to learners' progress are prominent features of these working relationships. This also ensures that training and assessment is provided in ways which are sympathetic to production requirements. At each employer, learners' progress is monitored using a regularly updated chart.

40. Learners are well supported. Working relationships and levels of communication between PTL's staff, employers and learners are very good. Regular staff visits are arranged to fit in with learners' needs and company shift patterns, including weekends and nights. Staff are adequately qualified and have current industry experience which is continually updated in line with the progressive environments in which they work. They are responsive to learners' wide-ranging learning and pastoral needs. Initial assessment identifies learners with additional learning needs. Very good levels of support are provided to learners with poor literacy and numeracy skills, and they have individual support in off-the-job training sessions. Good use is made of laptop computers and colour printers to support learning. Assessment documents and question sheets are explained carefully, and many of the test papers for short courses are available in a range of languages. Additional training is available for learners with particularly poor literacy and numeracy skills. NVQ assessment is well planned and conforms adequately to external standards. The materials developed to support learners through the NVQ are satisfactory.

41. Key skills training is integrated well with the apprenticeship programmes. Learners' pass rates are high in key skills tests. Most of key skills training takes place off-the-job in individual or small-group sessions. The sessions are organised early in the programme as soon as NVQ training is under way. A combination of well-written key skills workbooks and laptop computers is used effectively to develop number and communication skills at level 1. The workbooks and computer-produced charts relate well to industry and production situations which learners can clearly understand. Staff link key skills training to learners' progress through the NVQ. Learners are prepared carefully for the key skills tests, using examples to build the confidence of learners with additional learning needs.

42. Visits to learners by an assessor or other member of the provider's staff do not provide adequate feedback. They do not give judgements about the quality of the tasks completed, or how this contributes to the learners' progress. Assessment practice during learners' quarterly progress reviews is poor. The purpose of the review is not clearly understood by assessors. The outcomes of the review process are deficient and unhelpful to learners. The questioning of learners during progress reviews is passive and often not challenging enough. Some learning issues are not recorded during reviews and it is unclear how these are dealt with using more informal follow-up processes. Action-planning from the information provided by visit feedback and quarterly progress reviews is poor. In the worst examples no actions were identified or were only vaguely defined. Most actions identified do not have target completion dates and are not detailed enough. Employers do not have sufficient involvement in the review process. It is not made clear to learners what is required of them between visits and between quarterly reviews.

43. Learners are aware of the purpose and basic components of their programme. However, they do not understand sufficiently how the various parts of the programme relate to one another, or how they may become more involved in improving their progress.

Some learners do not know when they will complete the various units of the framework. The routine use of technical language by assessors and their references to detailed qualification charts does not improve learners' understanding of their programmes.

Leadership and management

44. Programme management is satisfactory. The programme manager plays an active role in influencing strategic partners in the improvement of standards, qualifications and apprenticeship frameworks. Members of the manufacturing team generally fulfil their responsibilities for health and safety, key skills, and the co-ordination of equal opportunities effectively. The quality monitoring at programme level is satisfactory. The internal verification process works well, especially in standardising good assessment practice and in promoting continuous improvement. Formal and informal feedback is used well in the analysis of programme performance. Communications with employers are good and they are well informed about the programme. The provision is able to respond promptly to emerging employer needs and routine service level issues. Additional services are commonly provided to employers, such as contributions to company health and safety advisory groups.

45. PTL's overall support, development and programme management of staff is satisfactory. However, equality of opportunity and diversity issues are dealt with as and when issues arise. The provider does not reinforce or develop learners' understanding of these subjects sufficiently during progress reviews or other visits. Staff's contribution to the development of the self-assessment report is well-meaning and purposeful, but the strengths and weaknesses identified for this area of learning did not match those identified during inspection.

