

INSPECTION REPORT

BTAL (UK) Limited

07 July 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
- **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*

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INSPECTION REPORT

DESCRIPTION OF THE PROVIDER

1. BTAL (UK) Limited (BTAL) is an employer-owned group training association which is based in Bradford and represents 56 member companies within a 20 mile radius of the Bradford Metropolitan area. Forty of the member companies currently employ work-based learning engineering apprentices.

2. BTAL also provides training programmes for some other areas of learning including business, administration and law, and construction, planning and the built environment, which are not in scope for this inspection. The provider has subcontract arrangements with Wakefield and Bradford colleges of further education.

OVERALL EFFECTIVENESS

Grade 2

3. **The overall effectiveness of the provision is good.** BTAL's leadership and management are good, as are its arrangements for equality of opportunity and quality improvement. Its provision is good in engineering.

4. **The inspection team was broadly confident in the reliability of the self-assessment process.** The process is well managed and includes all relevant parties. The report identified all the provision's strengths, but did not identify one key weakness and some minor ones. BTAL collects feedback from stakeholders and identifies areas for improvement.

5. **The provider has demonstrated that it is in a good position to make improvements.** BTAL has implemented improvements particularly effectively and has a well-managed process for identifying any areas of weakness. BTAL's development plan is reviewed regularly. Managers' actions have introduced particularly good improvements which have increased success rates since the 2001 inspection. However, the need to continuously improve the planning of on-the-job training had been underestimated.

KEY CHALLENGES FOR BTAL (UK) LIMITED:

- continue to improve the participation of women and minority ethnic young people
- continue to improve on the good apprenticeship framework success rates and reduce the number of learners who leave before completing their programme
- develop strategies for reinforcing equal opportunities training throughout the programme
- introduce a standard process for planning on-the-job training

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		2
Quality improvement		2

Engineering and manufacturing technologies			2
Contributory areas:	Number of learners	Contributory grade	
Engineering		2	
Apprenticeships for young people	66	2	

ABOUT THE INSPECTION

6. BTAL's engineering training and its leadership and management were inspected over four days by two inspectors. This was the only visit. The inspectors visited 11 employers and observed on-the-job training. They also visited the main subcontractor, Bradford College, and interviewed learners and BTAL's staff.

Number of inspectors	2
Number of inspection days	8
Number of learners interviewed	11
Number of staff interviewed	8
Number of employers interviewed	11
Number of subcontractors interviewed	5
Number of locations/sites/learning centres visited	11
Number of partners/external agencies interviewed	2
Number of visits	1

KEY FINDINGS

Achievements and standards

7. **Success rates for apprenticeship and advanced apprenticeship programmes are good.** The overall success rate for completion of frameworks by apprentices was 88 per cent in 2004-05, and for advanced apprentices it was 71 per cent during the same period. Most of the apprentices and advanced apprentices are completing their frameworks within the planned period of training.

8. **Learners develop good practical skills and apply them well in the workplace.** The standard of learners' work in their portfolios is good. Many learners achieve qualifications additional to those required for the apprenticeship framework.

The quality of provision

Grades given to learning sessions

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

9. **Learners receive good vocational support.** Advisers' visits to learners at work are very helpful and they provide good guidance to enable learners to achieve the national vocational qualification (NVQ) standards.

10. Experienced engineers, mentors and other personnel in the workplace support learners by coaching and direct training. Off-the-job training arrangements are supportive of learners and improve their development and understanding of vocational skills.

11. **Short-term targets are set particularly effectively** during assessment planning. These provide apprentices with a clear progression route. Targets are realistic and reached with the agreement of the employer.

12. **BTAL does not carry out enough formal planning of the on-the-job training with employers.** Training is not planned and linked sufficiently to the NVQ standards. Some employers do not have training plans to cover on-the-job training.

Leadership and management

13. **BTAL has a good strategic planning process,** with strong involvement by employers. The development of work-based learning features prominently in strategic planning and challenging performance targets are identified.

14. **The provider has good operational management.** The leadership and management of the engineering programmes are good. Learners' progress, retention and success rates are monitored very closely. Communications with employers and subcontractors are good.

15. **BTAL makes a significant contribution to area-wide partnerships and strategies for the development of high-quality work-based learning.** BTAL works closely, for example,

with schools and colleges in developing the new engineering curriculum and programmes for students aged between 14 and 19 years.

16. **Good promotional activities by BTAL widen participation in training.** BTAL works closely with schools and community organisations, Connexions and other bodies.

17. **BTAL has particularly effective improvement strategies.** The provider has successfully implemented strategies to improve success rates, which are at a good standard overall.

18. Well-established and organised quality assurance arrangements support continuous improvement. Managers review the implementation of policies and key processes regularly and effectively. Internal verification is used constructively to identify weaknesses and action improvement.

19. BTAL has no standardised procedure for planning learning in the workplace. The provider's ability to quality assure and continuously improve on-the-job training is not well established.

20. Self-assessment and development planning is good and much improved since the 2001 inspection. The findings and most of the judgements in the self-assessment report are consistent with those identified by inspectors.

21. BTAL's provision for literacy, numeracy and language support is satisfactory. The provider's initial assessment process identifies learners in need of such support. This is supplied by the subcontractor which also applies its own initial assessment of the learner.

Leadership and management

Strengths

- good strategic planning process
- significant contribution to the development of engineering work-based learning programmes
- good operational management
- good promotional activities to widen participation
- particularly effective improvement strategies

Weaknesses

- no significant weaknesses were identified

Engineering and manufacturing technologies

Engineering

Strengths

- good success rates for all apprenticeship programmes
- good skills development
- good vocational support for learners

- particularly effective target-setting for learners

Weaknesses

- insufficient planning of on-the-job training

WHAT LEARNERS LIKE ABOUT BTAL (UK) LIMITED:

- support from the BTAL advisers
- 'they (the advisers) take an interest in what I do'
- time given by employers to study at work
- 'monthly reviews and always knowing what you have to do next'
- being employed while training and getting a qualification
- development of practical skills

WHAT LEARNERS THINK BTAL (UK) LIMITED COULD IMPROVE:

- the arrangements for practical training when at work during holiday period

DETAILED INSPECTION FINDINGS

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

Grade 2

Strengths

- good strategic planning process
- significant contribution to the development of engineering work-based learning programmes
- good operational management
- good promotional activities to widen participation
- particularly effective improvement strategies

Weaknesses

- no significant weaknesses were identified

22. BTAL has a good strategic planning process which has involved the effective implementation and management of change. The development of work-based learning features prominently in strategic planning and challenging performance targets are identified. Priorities and strategic objectives are used effectively to plan and implement actions. Directors, employers and senior managers work together and with external support to develop strategies. Staff are involved, and the objectives are communicated effectively.

23. Good operational management supports the well-organised training programmes. The provider's communications with employers and subcontractors are good. Regular visits by staff to employers and learners are carried out and planned well. Staff are clear about their roles and carry out their responsibilities effectively. Internal communications are good. The staff team meets regularly and is well supported by managers. Teamwork is good and staff share a common sense of purpose, with a high value on the quality of the learners' experience, progress and achievements. Management team meetings are purposeful and key operational priorities are reviewed regularly. The management of subcontractors is effective.

24. BTAL's staff and its chief executive make significant contributions to the area-wide development of engineering work-based learning, and have done so over a sustained period. Young people can access well-organised programmes which include school students taking part in practical engineering tasks in real work settings with the involvement of employers. BTAL's staff contribute to working groups and other networks to develop the vocational curriculum and programmes for young people aged between 14 and 19 years. Engineering staff at BTAL also work with schools as science and engineering ambassadors. They provide practical support for teachers and increase the level of understanding of science, technology and engineering among students.

25. Monitoring and management review systems are effective and have enabled staff to become fully involved in the improvement of the training programme and the identification of trends. However, new measures of success have been introduced and some aspects of the current learner monitoring systems are not able to provide systematic

analyses and reports of timely successes. This situation has been recognised in the self-assessment report and appropriate actions are being taken.

26. Staff are appropriately qualified and experienced. Staff appraisals, individual development, and staff training are implemented satisfactorily, although not enough staff equality of opportunity training has been carried out in the recent past. The management of subcontracted provision is effective. Arrangements for supporting learners with any literacy or numeracy needs are satisfactory. The provider's use of data, analysis and the implementation of management information systems are all satisfactory, although further information requirements to meet the new measures of success have been identified by BTAL.

Equality of opportunity

Contributory grade 2

27. Good promotional activities by BTAL help to widen participation in training, and these activities are highly valued by other partners in the community. For a long time, BTAL has been involved in a broad range of activities to widen participation, working closely with schools, colleges, regional and local organisations and Connexions to promote work-based learning in the Bradford area. For example, between 2003-05, BTAL provided a customised training programme for 48 year 11 students, including 18 from minority ethnic groups, and five girls, as an introduction to industry. This programme was managed and staffed by BTAL and based in workplaces using modern resources. It was provided outside normal school hours over two terms and was well attended. The evaluation of this programme by all stakeholders was very positive and further programmes are planned.

28. BTAL's staff work in partnership with teachers in local schools which have high numbers of minority ethnic students. Work with these schools has included school governance, work experience, site visits, short introductory courses, mock interviews, careers fairs, 'just in time' workshops and team-building activities. BTAL also meets with students' parents and community leaders at the Asian community centres. A similar range of activities has been carried out with girls' schools, in an attempt to attract more young women into engineering training.

29. BTAL has successfully initiated and provided a scholarship programme in partnership with employers, local colleges and the local regeneration partnership. This involved young people who typically would not gain entry to an apprenticeship in work-based engineering training. This one-year, post-16 programme has operated successfully for two years and achieved its targets of 20 per cent participation by young people from minority ethnic groups, 80 per cent achievement of qualifications, and 80 per cent progression to employment or further education.

30. BTAL provides short engineering introduction programmes for year 11 and year 12 students. These short courses are based in work environments, and they last for one week during half term and are targeted at under-represented groups. Learners take part in a well-designed programme which includes health and safety, practical industrial experience, industrial visits, college visits, jobsearch, and an introduction to apprenticeship requirements. Feedback from schools has been very positive.

31. Currently, 10 per cent of BTAL's learners are from minority ethnic groups, mainly young Asian men. Over the past three years BTAL has introduced a number of successful

initiatives. The proportion of learners from minority ethnic groups has increased by 50 per cent. The success rate for this group compares well with that of the majority group. Currently, one young woman engineering learner is progressing well, and in the past three years all of the young women learners who joined the programme successfully completed the apprenticeship framework. Good marketing and promotional materials are used to support the strategies to widen participation. A young woman apprentice who completed the full apprenticeship framework was elected apprentice of the year. She has been involved in promotional work and providing a positive role model to promote wider participation in work-based learning generally, and in engineering in particular.

32. BTAL monitors recruitment, progress and achievements effectively. Attracting more women and young people from minority ethnic groups remains a high priority. BTAL has implemented arrangements to ensure that initial assessment processes are not gender or culturally biased. External recruitment targets for work-based learning have been exceeded during 2005-06 for women and minority ethnic learners. BTAL recognises that more needs to be done to further improve participation and achievement rates for these groups, and has set itself challenging targets.

33. BTAL has a strong commitment to equality of opportunity and has established appropriate policies and procedures. All staff and learners are informed about equal opportunities through induction and training sessions. Learners' understanding of equality of opportunity is satisfactory. Progress reviews with learners include equal opportunities, but they do not focus sufficiently on specific workplace topics.

Quality improvement

Contributory grade 2

34. BTAL has successfully implemented new quality improvement strategies. Significant improvements have been achieved to success rates which have now reached a good standard overall. Framework completion rates, success rates, learners' rates of progress, and the retention of learners have all improved significantly over the past three years. For example, the rate of completions of frameworks by advanced apprentices in 2004-05 was 76 per cent, which was 19 per cent higher than in 2003-04. For apprentices, the improvement rate was 24 per cent during the same period. Currently, most learners are progressing at a rate which is at least satisfactory.

35. The improvement strategies include reviewing and redesigning programmes and methods, improvements to the management and review of the subcontracted provision, an increased focus on success targets by the staff team, and closer attention to the progress and retention of learners. Higher levels of contact have been established with learners and employers in the workplace, and there are more observations of naturally occurring evidence in the workplace.

36. The overall improving trend has continued during the current year, 2005-06. The success rate for apprentices has improved further and is very good. However, in the case of advanced apprentices a few learners have left the programme without completing their technical certificates. BTAL has fully investigated the reasons for the learners leaving, and has made every effort to advise and guide the learners involved.

37. Well-established and organised quality assurance arrangements support continuous improvement. Managers review the implementation of policies and key processes regularly. Staff are involved effectively in the improvement activities, including the sharing

of good practice. Internal verification is used constructively to identify and promote actions for improvement. However, there is no standardised process for planning learning in the workplace, and this restricts the opportunity to quality assure and continuously improve on-the-job training.

38. Employers' and learners' views about training are collected and analysed effectively and this information contributes to overall evaluation and improvement. Arrangements for quality improvement with subcontractors are established and working well.

39. Self-assessment and development planning are good and much improved from the inspection of 2001. The process is now well established and the participation by staff and other stakeholders is good. The current report is well presented, suitably self-critical, and covers all aspects of the Common Inspection Framework effectively. Data is used to support judgements where appropriate. All of the strengths found by inspectors were identified in the report. Some of the strengths featured in the report were considered by inspectors to be normal practice. The main weakness was not identified. Action has been taken to resolve weaknesses identified previously and these areas are now at least satisfactory.

AREAS OF LEARNING

Engineering and manufacturing technologies

Grade 2

Contributory areas:	Number of learners	Contributory grade
Engineering		2
Apprenticeships for young people	66	2

40. BTAL provides training in engineering and manufacturing technologies. Currently, 66 learners are on engineering programmes, and, of these, 23 are apprentices and 43 are advanced apprentices. After initial assessment by BTAL, learners are employed by one of the BTAL's member companies. Literacy, numeracy and language support requirements are identified at the initial assessment. Wakefield or Bradford colleges of further education provide any additional support required. Most learners complete their initial one-year off-the-job engineering training at level 2 NVQ and work towards key skills qualifications and the technical certificate at the subcontracted colleges. The remainder of their training period is spent in the workplace working towards the level 3 NVQ and wider key skills. Advanced apprentices then attend college for one day each week, working towards their technical certificates. BTAL employs training advisers who are qualified assessors and they visit the workplace every four weeks to assess learners and review their progress with employers.

Engineering

Strengths

- good success rates for all apprenticeship programmes
- good skills development
- good vocational support for learners
- particularly effective target-setting for learners

Weaknesses

- insufficient planning of on-the-job training

Achievement and standards

41. Success rates for apprenticeship and advanced apprenticeship programmes are good. The overall framework completion rate for apprentices has improved from 64 per cent in 2003-04, to 88 per cent in 2004-05 and this trend has continued in the current year. Overall framework completion rates for advanced apprentices have improved from 52 per cent to 71 per cent. In both programmes most apprentices are now completing their frameworks within the planned period of training.

42. Many learners achieve qualifications in addition to the apprenticeship framework. For example, three learners achieved seven additional NVQ units, meeting the agreed targets of the employer and the learners. Additional qualifications achieved include coded welding, slinging and lifting, abrasive wheels regulations, first aid, computer-aided design

and product-specific qualification and training.

43. Learners develop good practical skills and in many cases work to demanding industrial standards with the minimum of supervision, although help is available if required. Employers comment positively about learners' standards of work. The evidence presented in learners' portfolios is to a good standard and diverse. On- and off-the-job practical work is good. Employers provide a wide range of engineering tasks for learners to practise and develop their skills.

Programme	End Year	Success Rate	No, of learners	Provider NVQ Rate	National NVQ Rate	Provider framework rate	National framework rate
Advanced Apprenticeships	2003-04	overall	23	74	57	52	46
		timely	24	38	34	25	27
	2004-05	overall	21	76	57	71	45
		timely	23	43	33	43	25
Apprenticeships	2003-04	overall	11	91	48	64	32
		timely	11	55	22	55	13
	2004-05	overall	8	100	52	88	41
		timely	6	100	27	83	19

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

44. Learners receive good vocational support from employers, workplace mentors and BTAL's training advisers. Advisers' visits to learners at work are very helpful and provide good guidance to allow learners to achieve the NVQ standards. Learners value these visits and the coaching that they receive from BTAL's experienced and well-qualified engineering adviser team. Experienced engineers in the workplace provide guidance and good on-the-job training, but BTAL does not plan this training well enough with employers. Employers allow time and resources during the working week to support their learners' work on NVQ assignments. Some learners develop further knowledge, understanding and skills from attending specialist training courses.

45. Particularly effective short-term target-setting takes place during assessment planning. Targets are realistic, achievable and measurable and can be completed in the period before the next progress review. These targets are shared with employers, which then provide on-the-job training and assessment opportunities to help the learners achieve their targets and make progress. Assessment arrangements are appropriate, well planned and implemented fairly and accurately.

46. Training resources are appropriate. There is a suitable number of advisers to carry out planned reviews and assessments. Resources in the workplace are good and meet current industrial standards. Off-the-job training and resources are satisfactory.

47. On-the-job training is not planned well enough. In some cases, BTAL has not adequately cross-referenced employers' training plans to the NVQ standards. In other cases, employers do not have training plans which detail on-the-job training. There is no formal analysis of the tasks carried out by learners in individual employers' workplaces to ensure coverage of the range and standards of the qualification, and to establish whether alternative arrangements must be made in the learners' learning plans.

Leadership and management

48. Leadership and management of the engineering programmes are good. Learners' progress, achievement, retention and success rates are monitored very closely. Significant improvements have been made to learners' success and retention rates over the past three years. Quality assurance is carried out effectively, although on-the-job training is not quality assured sufficiently. Internal verification is satisfactory. The quality of the subcontracted provision is monitored well and effective use is made of the colleges' teaching and learning observation data. Communications and co-operation with the subcontracted colleges are good and there are frequent visits by BTAL's advisers to the colleges.

49. Internal communications are good and there are monthly staff meetings. Staff work well as a team and formal and informal communications are very good. Staff were involved to an appropriate extent in the self-assessment process and report. The self-assessment report was suitably critical and judgemental. All of the strengths identified at inspection were identified in the report. Some further strengths featured in the report were considered by inspectors to be normal practice. The main weakness was not identified. Action has been taken to resolve weaknesses identified previously and these areas are now at least satisfactory

