

INSPECTION REPORT

GB Training (UK) Ltd

07 September 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**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*

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INSPECTION REPORT

DESCRIPTION OF THE PROVIDER

1. GB Training (UK) Ltd (GB Training) is a private work-based learning provider established in 1995, with its head office in Birmingham. It provides Train to Gain national vocational qualification (NVQ) programmes for employers in Birmingham and the surrounding West Midlands area. Government-funded training comprises around 40 per cent of the company's work.
2. A chairperson leads the company, supported by a managing director who is responsible for the everyday management of the organisation, a quality manager, a finance manager and over 40 other staff.
3. Between 2003 and 2006, GB Training was involved in a Birmingham and Solihull Learning and Skills Council (LSC) contract to deliver NVQ courses under the Employer Training Pilot (ETP) programme. From April 2006, it has an interim Train to Gain contract for 375 learners. From August 2006, GB Training has a subcontract with Black Country Group Training for Train to Gain provision, for 95 learners.

OVERALL EFFECTIVENESS

Grade 3

4. **The overall effectiveness of the provision is satisfactory.** More specifically, leadership and management are satisfactory and equality of opportunity is good. However, quality improvement is inadequate. The training provision in engineering and manufacturing technologies is good. Provision in preparation for life and work is satisfactory.
5. **The inspection team had little confidence in the reliability of the self-assessment process.** Learners, employers, other stakeholders and key staff were insufficiently involved in the self-assessment process. The most recent self-assessment report was insufficiently detailed and did not identify most of the key strengths and weaknesses in leadership and management or in the provision.
6. **The provider has demonstrated that it has sufficient capacity to make improvements.** GB Training is sufficiently aware of the improvements necessary, particularly in quality improvement. It has demonstrated that it is a responsive provider, with the capacity to provide a clear strategic direction for the management of change.

KEY CHALLENGES FOR GB TRAINING (UK) LTD:

- improve quality assurance
- improve the self-assessment process
- make better use of more accurate data
- improve the management of Skills for Life provision
- improve the recording of assessment in driving goods vehicles
- improve the monitoring and recording of individual learners' progress

- maintain the high success rates in driving good vehicles

GRADES

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

Grades awarded at inspection

Leadership and management		3
Contributory grades:		
Equality of opportunity		2
Quality improvement		4

Engineering and manufacturing technologies			2
Contributory areas:	Number of learners	Contributory grade	
Transportation		2	
Train to Gain	16	2	

Preparation for life and work			3
Contributory areas:	Number of learners	Contributory grade	
Literacy		3	
Train to Gain	200	3	

ABOUT THE INSPECTION

7. Three inspectors visited the provider for four days. They inspected Train to Gain programmes in engineering and manufacturing technologies and preparation for life and work, as well as leadership and management.

Number of inspectors	3
Number of inspection days	12
Number of learners interviewed	26
Number of staff interviewed	14
Number of employers interviewed	7
Number of subcontractors interviewed	3
Number of locations/sites/learning centres visited	9
Number of visits	1

Leadership and Management

Strengths

- good strategic planning
- good partnership arrangements
- particularly good initiatives to involve employers and learners from minority ethnic groups in training

Weaknesses

- insufficient use of data
- poor quality assurance
- inadequate self-assessment process

Engineering and manufacturing technologies

Transportation

Strengths

- good success rates
- good achievement of additional NVQ units and further qualifications
- strong links with supportive employers

Weaknesses

- inadequate recording of assessment

Preparation for life and work

Literacy

Strengths

- good development of learners' skills for employment
- very flexible arrangements for the delivery of literacy provision
- clear strategic direction for Skills for Life provision
- well-established, productive links with employers

Weaknesses

- insufficient reviewing and recording of individual progress
- inadequate management of literacy provision in driving goods vehicles
- insufficient use of data to monitor the provision
- inadequate quality assurance

WHAT LEARNERS LIKE ABOUT GB TRAINING (UK) LTD:

- the good support from employers and GB Training
- assessors are always there for you
- really enjoyable teaching
- 'I've really grown in confidence since coming onto the programme'
- 'now my children have grown up, I want to do something for myself'
- 'I'm making really good progress'
- 'it's the first qualification I have gained'

WHAT LEARNERS THINK GB TRAINING (UK) LTD COULD IMPROVE:

- more training needed
- 'need a bit of extra help at times'
- better use of videos and similar resources
- would like the programme to be better planned in advance

DETAILED INSPECTION FINDINGS

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

Grade 3

Strengths

- good strategic planning
- good partnership arrangements
- particularly good initiatives to involve employers and learners from minority ethnic groups in training

Weaknesses

- insufficient use of data
- poor quality assurance
- inadequate self-assessment process

8. Strategic planning is good. GB Training has a strong strategic vision agreed by the directors. The strategy is clearly set out in a well-thought-out business plan that includes a particularly thorough analysis of the organisation's strengths and weaknesses. This document is reviewed and revised regularly. The strengths and weaknesses help inform the self-assessment action plan.

9. Good partnership arrangements with a range of other local and regional organisations bring positive benefits to learners. GB training takes a very active role in local and regional partnerships involved in developing the Train to Gain programme. It also works closely with local colleges, training consortia and Government agencies. The partnerships help ensure that the company is able to support staff, employers and learners more effectively through the sharing of knowledge and good practice. Marketing is effective, much of which is by direct personal contact from senior staff. GB Training carries out a detailed assessment with employers to identify skills gaps, to negotiate the training programmes and to agree training requirements for individual employees.

10. The company has a strong emphasis on staff training and development, which senior managers plan to meet the needs of the business and of individual staff. Staff are allowed time during working hours to attend training, with company funding available. Performance appraisal is satisfactory and takes place annually. The company is accredited with the Investors in People standard, a national standard for improving an organisation's performance through its people, an accreditation for information, advice and guidance and ISO 9000, an international quality assurance standard. Communications throughout GB Training are satisfactory. Formal team meetings take place on a regular basis, but the recording of action points from these meetings is insufficient. Learning resources and accommodation at the company's main site are satisfactory. Training rooms are large and well equipped. Learners and staff have good access to information technology resources.

11. A Skills for Life strategy is in place. This is the government's strategy on training in literacy, numeracy and the use of language. Learners in all vocational areas can receive literacy support as part of the Skills for Life Train to Gain contract. All learners take the Basic Skills Agency screening test and GB Training records the overall level of learners'

literacy skills. However, many learners do not have their specific, individual literacy needs fully identified and recorded. Some work takes place with small groups of learners and individuals. However, the literacy work with learners in whole groups in the more vocationally related programmes, does not sufficiently meet their individual needs.

Equality of opportunity

Contributory grade 2

12. Arrangements to promote equality of opportunity are good. GB Training has very successfully recruited large numbers of learners onto training programmes from small, medium-sized and large companies, owned and managed by members of minority ethnic communities in and around Birmingham. As a part of their overall business strategy and integral to their general business planning cycle, the company has identified organisations and tailored their marketing activities to identify their training needs. They recruit learners from businesses owned by people of Asian, Chinese, Arabic and African-Caribbean origin, many of whom have not previously been involved in employee training. Many of the training programmes continue after the initial training need has been met, as the successful completion of one type of qualification allows employers to recognise the benefits that further staff training and qualifications bring to their companies.

13. Forty-seven per cent of staff employed by GB Training identify themselves as either non-white British or as a member of a minority ethnic group. Some of these staff successfully assist the company in employer engagement and in working with learners from minority ethnic backgrounds.

14. The company has clear policies and procedures covering anti-discrimination and equality of opportunity, harassment, bullying, complaints, appeals and the treatment of learners, which most learners are aware of. Equality of opportunity is covered at the learners' induction. Learners are each given a copy of the company's equality of opportunity policies, which clearly and concisely set out learners' rights and responsibilities. Learners have a good understanding of the complaints and appeals procedures. Trainer/assessors discuss equal opportunities with learners at progress reviews. The company recognises that it can improve this work. Recently it provided additional guidance notes to all assessors, to ensure that they discuss a wider range of issues relating to equality. Staff discuss equality issues and policies with employers when they are approved as work placements.

15. The company carries out regular analysis of equal opportunities data, to help ensure that the company maintains and improves learner and employer representation. It is clearly aware of the ethnic profile of its learners, the proportion of men and women and learners with disabilities, and differences in the success rates of these groups of learners. Senior staff regularly discuss this analysis at senior management meetings and agree actions if there are any areas of concern.

Quality improvement

Contributory grade 4

16. Quality improvement is inadequate. Although the company makes good use of learner and employer surveys to support improvements in the provision, arrangements to quality assure all aspects of the provision are either incomplete or not fully implemented. Senior managers are insufficiently aware of what is taking place across its provision. One significant example of this is that for learners in driving goods vehicles training who are also on literacy provision, staff changed the learner agreements after learners had signed them, in some cases adding a literacy qualification underneath the agreed vocational aim,

and in other examples changing the level of the literacy qualification. The alterations are not all dated or signed to show who made the alterations. Learners were not informed of the changes or given the opportunity to comment on the alterations, and some were unaware that they are enrolled on a literacy course.

17. Individual learning plans across the Skills for Life provision are often not complete, and progress reviews are insufficient. These are particularly significant with the new contract requirement from April 2006, for learners to achieve in literacy at a level above that identified at initial assessment. Progress is slow in improving these aspects of the provision.

18. The company has a system of using key performance indicators, including success rates, to monitor learners' progress. However, during the inspection the company was unable to produce accurate data for learners on transportation, literacy or care programmes. It is unable to plan adequately for improvements in the provision on the basis of this data. Although the company does some analysis of data, particularly for contract compliance and for equal opportunities monitoring, it does not routinely use the collection and analysis of data to set targets and measure quality improvements.

19. Internal verification systems meet awarding body requirements. Working relationships in the assessor team are good, with effective informal communications and the sharing of good practice. Assessors and verifiers hold regular, well-attended meetings, with an emphasis on learners' progress and how assessors can improve the assessment process. However, following these meetings, staff do not sufficiently identify actions to effect change and improvement. Verifiers observe assessment practice, but they do not always sufficiently identify the development needs of individual assessors. Where development needs are identified, verifiers do not always identify or record clear action plans with appropriate timescales.

20. The company carries out some observations of the training, although the approach to these observations is not sufficiently systematic. Feedback to staff does not always identify specific staff development needs, particularly in the Skills for Life provision. For example, in the sessions observed of the literacy development included in the vocational training, observers focus predominantly on the vocational aspects of this training and do not provide sufficient feedback on developments for literacy. Observations are not always carried out by observers who have sufficient subject-specific knowledge.

21. The self-assessment process is inadequate. Learners, employers, other stakeholders and key staff are insufficiently involved in the self-assessment process. The most recent self-assessment report was insufficiently detailed and did not identify most of the key strengths and weaknesses in leadership and management or in the provision.

AREAS OF LEARNING

Engineering and manufacturing technologies

Grade 2

Contributory areas:	Number of learners	Contributory grade
Transportation		2
Train to Gain	16	2

22. GB Training provides training in driving goods vehicles at level 2 of the NVQ to drivers of large goods vehicles. Learners are employed at local depots of national companies, where the training and assessment takes place within the working environment. There are currently 16 learners. All learners are on the Train to Gain programme working towards all seven units of the full NVQ at level 2. All learners who complete the NVQ, progress to additional units. Learners are referred to GB Training by the local chamber of commerce. Workplace supervisors and trainers provide all the on-the-job training. GB Training provides coaching and the assessment of learners' work through subcontracted assessors. Subcontractors also carry out the internal verification.

Transportation

Strengths

- good success rates
- good achievement of additional NVQ units and further qualifications
- strong links with supportive employers

Weaknesses

- inadequate recording of assessment

Achievement and standards

23. Success rates are good on Train for Gain and the former ETP programme. In 2005-06, all 15 learners successfully completed the programme and achieved the full NVQ. In the current year the success rate is 72 per cent, with 24 per cent of learners still in learning. Many of these current learners are progressing well and are near the end of their NVQ. Learners achieve good driver skills. The standard of learners' knowledge and understanding of transportation is good. There is a high level of motivation, and many drivers achieve a qualification for the first time. All learners who complete the NVQ, have progressed to taking additional units. Many achieve all of the additional NVQ units available. Several learners have progressed to further qualifications, for example, transportation of dangerous goods and the certificate of professional competence.

The quality of provision

24. GB Training effectively selects and works with employers that are firmly committed to training and to developing their drivers. Learners greatly benefit from the strong links between GB Training and the employers they work with. The companies employ their

own experienced supervisory staff who provide extensive instruction and short courses. Employers provide a wide range of good work experience and support for the programme. This enables learners to quickly meet the NVQ requirements. Employers are well prepared for learners to extend their range of jobs, to widen their experience and to fulfill the NVQ requirements. Learners are given sufficient time to develop their portfolios and to carry out the necessary research to meet the knowledge and understanding requirements. The programme clearly meets the needs of the learners and the requirements of local and national employers.

25. The standard of coaching offered by assessors and employers is satisfactory. Individual sessions are effectively adapted to meet learners' needs and are closely related to issues resulting from assessment. Other training is satisfactory. Instructions are clear and concise. Assessors know their subjects well and give good advice and guidance. All assessors are adequately qualified and are former professional drivers. Learners and employers recognise and value their expertise and experience. Training support is readily available and assessors frequently arrange meetings with learners in the evening and early mornings. A significant number of assessments by observation are carried out outside normal working hours.

26. Physical training resources are satisfactory and adequate for updating and extending learners' knowledge and understanding. These include DVDs, videos and well-prepared handouts. Learners benefit from the topics covered, such as drivers' hours, tachographs, fuel efficiency and defensive driving. The company holds a good range of books. Pastoral support is satisfactory. Advice, information and guidance are adequate for the needs of the learners. The opportunity for additional support is adequate for learners with identified literacy needs. Learners have an initial assessment in literacy at induction, but they are not routinely given the results. Individual learning plans do not record additional learning needs and progress reviews do not sufficiently cover additional support.

27. Assessments by observation are satisfactory. However, the recording of assessments is inadequate. Reports are brief, very descriptive and contain insufficient judgements. The feedback documents do not have sufficient detail and do not give learners sufficient information to rectify faults or to help them progress to the next stage. The planning of assessments is only from one assessment to the next. There is no overall assessment plan for the achievement of the full NVQ. Witness testimonies are pre-prepared for line managers to sign and learners are insufficiently involved in portfolio-building.

Leadership and management

28. GB Training subcontracts the management of the programme to a qualified and experienced assessor, who is also an internal verifier. The subcontractor employs three further qualified assessors. The subcontractor liaises well with GB Training staff and attends all relevant internal meetings. A service level contract is in place, which the company adequately monitors. There is a strong culture of responding to the learners' needs and employers' requirements. Staff meetings are regular, relevant and suitably recorded. An effective monitoring system is in place and staff regularly discuss learners' progress and take appropriate action if learners are falling behind schedule.

29. The promotion of equality of opportunity is satisfactory. Internal verification meets awarding body requirements but it does not identify the weakness in the recording of assessment. Managers do not routinely use data to make management decisions. Quality

assurance arrangements do not identify that engineering learners who are also taking literacy qualifications, are not sufficiently clear that they are enrolled on these programmes or that changes are made to signed agreements without their knowledge. The self-assessment report is sufficiently descriptive but it does not identify the strengths and weaknesses identified during the inspection.

Preparation for life and work**Grade 3**

Contributory areas:	Number of learners	Contributory grade
Literacy Train to Gain	200	3 3

30. GB Training currently has a Train to Gain Skills for Life contract, for up to 200 learners. At the time of the inspection, GB Training already has 200 learners on literacy programmes. All the Train to Gain provision is employer based, with learners in employment across Birmingham and the surrounding West Midlands area. Many learners are also taking NVQs in care, driving goods vehicles, customer service and information and communications technology (ICT). Many of the NVQ trainer/assessors also have responsibility for the delivery of the literacy provision. A variety of different models for the training are available for learners, including literacy skills established in vocational programmes and discrete literacy support in small groups and with individuals.

Literacy*Strengths*

- good development of learners' skills for employment
- very flexible arrangements for the delivery of literacy provision
- clear strategic direction for Skills for Life provision
- well-established, productive links with employers

Weaknesses

- insufficient reviewing and recording of individual progress
- inadequate management of literacy provision in driving goods vehicles
- insufficient use of data to monitor the provision
- inadequate quality assurance

Achievement and standards

31. Learners develop good skills for employment. GB Training places a strong emphasis on negotiating training with individual employers, to meet the needs of the organisation and to develop and enhance the learners' work-related skills. Such work includes developing learners' report writing, communication, team building, and mentoring and coaching skills. Feedback from employers is generally very positive. Learners develop appropriate work-related skills, personal and social skills and increase their self-confidence.

32. In 2004-05 and again in 2005-06, over 1,000 learners each year gained a national literacy qualification. However, most achieved at the same level as that identified through their initial assessment and not at a level above. From April 2006, the LSC contract for Train to Gain now requires learners to progress to the level above. Achievement data is not yet available for the current learners. Previous data is not sufficiently accurate and no data table is shown.

The quality of provision

33. Arrangements for the delivery of Skills for Life provision are flexible. GB Training offers tailor-made programmes to meet employers' needs. The company has successfully developed programmes for individual organisations in the private and public sectors. Literacy development is an integral part of vocational programmes, including moving and handling, health and safety and customer care programmes, delivered on employers' premises. Trainers are flexible in the timings of sessions and work around employers' needs, for example by accommodating shift patterns as appropriate. Some learners also have access to additional literacy support in small groups or individually, either on employers' premises or at GB Training's main training centre in Birmingham.

34. The use of learning resources is satisfactory. Trainer/assessors have access to a wide range of supportive resources, including the use of ICT. However, during the inspection, mostly paper-based materials were used.

35. Arrangements for the learners' induction are satisfactory. There is an initial assessment in literacy and some diagnostic work based on completion of an assessment task. However, the reviewing and recording of individual progress is insufficient. Not all learners have their specific literacy needs clearly identified. The use of individual learning plans is inconsistent and many are incomplete. Others have targets or goals which are not clearly identified or measurable. Trainer/assessors do not carry out reviews of individual progress on a regular basis and learners are not fully aware of their progress with literacy development. Some of the learners on driving goods vehicles course, were not aware that they were signed up to do a national literacy examination. Learners across the provision do not always have enough literacy support or training, to enable them to make sufficient progress.

Leadership and management

36. GB Training has a clear strategic direction for the literacy provision, which is clearly identified in the business plan. The managing director forges productive links with other providers, which can provide examples of good practice. The chairperson and managing director represent the company on key strategic development groups, both locally and regionally, and also make positive contributions to developments nationally.

37. All learners are employed and links with employers are well established and productive. The company has strong links with local employer networks. Managers work particularly hard to forge links with employers, particularly those that have not previously participated in training. The company provides strong support for staff development and training in literacy. Two members of staff currently have a level 4 literacy qualification. Other trainer/assessors are working towards level 3 literacy qualifications. However, not all trainers currently have sufficient expertise or experience to work with learners on developing their literacy skills.

38. The management of the literacy provision is satisfactory overall, but is inadequate for learners in driving goods vehicles. Roles and responsibilities and internal and external communication are not sufficiently clear. Some learners are not sufficiently aware that their vocational programme, such as health and safety and manual handling, is also aiming to develop their literacy skills. Results from the initial assessment in literacy that learners

take as part of the induction programme, are not routinely shared with learners. Staff in driving goods vehicles have changed individual learning plans and learner agreements which learners had previously signed, without their knowledge. This included adding an aim to take a national qualification in literacy, which learners were unaware of. Overall, there are only 16 driving goods vehicles learners out of 200 learners in total.

39. The use of data to monitor the provision is insufficient. Inspectors had great difficulty obtaining accurate data for success rates in literacy for 2004-05 and 2005-06, which involved over 1,000 learners in each year. GB Training was unable to provide accurate data on the proportion of learners who gained level 1 or level 2 literacy qualifications, as all achievements had been put together into one aggregated figure. For the contract from April 2006, GB Training presented several different versions of learner numbers and current achievements of national qualifications.

40. Quality assurance is inadequate. The quality assurance framework is not sufficiently implemented in the literacy provision, particularly in driving goods vehicles. The organisation is not sufficiently aware of learners' progress across the literacy provision. Observations of training do take place, but in the joint literacy and vocational sessions, observers' feedback focuses predominantly on the vocational side of the training.

41. The self-assessment process is not sufficiently inclusive. Staff, learners and employers are not sufficiently involved in the production of the latest self-assessment report. It is insufficiently detailed and does not identify most of the key strengths and weaknesses of the literacy provision. The grade given in the self-assessment report is a grade higher than that given by inspectors.

