

# West Anglia Training Association

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## Background information

### Inspection judgements

Inspectors use a four-point scale to summarise their judgements about achievement and standards, the quality of provision, and leadership and management, which includes a grade for equality of opportunity.

#### Key for inspection grades

Grade 1	Outstanding
Grade 2	Good
Grade 3	Satisfactory
Grade 4	Inadequate

Further information can be found on how inspection judgements are made on [www.ofsted.gov.uk](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk).

### Scope of the inspection

In deciding the scope of the inspection, inspectors take account of the provider's most recent self-assessment report and development plans, and comments from the local Learning and Skills Council (LSC) or other funding body. Where appropriate, inspectors also consider the previous inspection report ([www.ofsted.gov.uk](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk)), reports from the inspectorates' quality monitoring or annual assessment visits, and data on learners and their achievements over the period since the previous inspection.

In addition to reporting on overall effectiveness of the organisation, its capacity to improve further, achievement and standards, quality of provision and leadership and management, this inspection focused on specialist provision in:

- Engineering and manufacturing technologies

## Description of the provider

1. West Anglia Training Association (WATA) is a registered non-profit making company based in Huntingdon with over 100 members located throughout eastern England. Most of the company's income is derived from providing a range of courses, including technical, engineering and management skills programmes to member companies. The company employs 29 full-time staff of whom six are dedicated to apprentice training. Four contractors provide assessment and verification.
2. WATA has a contract with Cambridgeshire LSC, which is approximately 20% of its turnover to provide training for apprentices. In November 2007, there were 193 learners of whom 108 were advanced apprentices and 85 were apprentices. Most learners are following engineering and manufacturing technologies programmes with a few following business administration, and also information and communications technology. Off-the-job training is subcontracted to 14 further education colleges mainly in the east of England.
3. WATA provides training for companies across the whole of the east of England. It is generally a prosperous area with low levels of unemployment although there are pockets of higher unemployment in some rural areas of the region such as the Fenland.

## Summary of grades awarded

Effectiveness of provision	Good: Grade 2
Capacity to improve	Satisfactory: Grade 3
Achievement and standards	Satisfactory: Grade 3
Quality of provision	Good: Grade 2
Leadership and management	Good: Grade 2
Equality of opportunity	Contributory grade: Good: Grade 2

## Sector subject area

Engineering and manufacturing technologies	Good: Grade 2
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## Overall judgement

### Effectiveness of provision

#### Good: Grade 2

4. The overall effectiveness of the provision is good. The engineering provision for apprentices is good. Achievement and standards, the quality of provision and leadership and management are good. Equality of opportunity is good. The capacity to improve is satisfactory.

#### Capacity to improve

#### Satisfactory: Grade 3

5. WATA demonstrates a satisfactory capacity to improve. A range of improvements have been put in place since the previous inspection. Learners develop good skills and achieve additional qualifications, often over and above those which are required by the framework. The management of assessment is now thorough and there are more observations of apprentices at work taking place than before. Assessment practices have generally improved with a wider range of methods being used including photographs. Improved management systems enable better monitoring of learners' progress. Equality of opportunity has been strengthened by ensuring that learners and employers are better informed and participation is widened through more effective promotion of training.
6. Since the previous inspection, overall success rates have remained satisfactory but have only improved by one per cent for advanced apprentices, who make up most of the learners. Most programmes for advanced apprentices in engineering are still usually planned for 48 months. The rate at which learners complete on time is very low with two thirds of advanced apprentices finishing beyond their planned end date in 2006. However, only a very small number of learners currently in training are making slow progress against their objectives.
7. Self-assessment and quality assurance are satisfactory. The self-assessment process is well established and staff involvement is good although feedback collected from learners and other stakeholders is not always subject to sufficient analysis to inform actions for improvement. While the current report is generally accurate, some aspects are not sufficiently self-critical and it does not fully examine the lack of improvement to success rates although it does address poor timely achievement. The current report is comprehensive but is not written in a way which clearly addresses all the key questions. Data, including overall success rates, is presented accurately in the report, but some analysis of data lacks clarity.

## Key strengths

- High rate of achievement of additional qualifications
- Good skills development
- Very good support for learners
- Particularly effective management of subcontractors
- Strong staff involvement in organisational strategy and business planning
- Good range of initiatives to raise overall awareness of equality of opportunity

## Key areas for improvement

- Slow progress
- Insufficient use of feedback to inform quality improvement

## Main findings

### Achievement and standards

#### Satisfactory: Grade 3

8. Learners are set challenging targets; they produce good work and demonstrate engineering skills of a high standard. For example, a learner in his final year of training is able to carry out planned maintenance duties on water pumping installations with minimal supervision, using good problem-solving skills. Most learners are working for qualifications which are beyond the requirements of the framework and many learners achieve additional qualifications during their apprenticeship. Most learners undertake and achieve key skills at a higher level than required by their framework and many progress to study for higher national qualifications. In addition, many learners complete specialist engineering industry courses such as wiring regulations, lift truck driving, slinging, and abrasive wheels. Some courses result in learners achieving competent operator status from professional and awarding bodies. A number of learners achieve additional units at NVQ Level 2. Learners enjoy their training and produce good quality work to industrial standards.
9. Success rates for advanced apprentices and apprentices are satisfactory. The average framework success rate for all engineering apprentices was 56% in 2003/04, 59% in 2004/05 and 59% in 2005/06. However, between 2004 and 2006 most learners progressed slowly and achieved their apprenticeship or advanced apprenticeship framework after their planned end date. This issue is recognised in the self-assessment report and WATA has put measures in place to address it, such as more frequent reviews, a new progress monitoring system, an increased number of assessors and more observations of learners in the workplace, as these have yet to impact on the rate and pace at which learners achieve and progress. WATA is currently re-considering the duration of programmes and how completion dates are planned.

### Quality of provision

#### Good: Grade 2

10. Training and development in engineering and key skills are good; a strength recognised in the self-assessment report. Many employers have well-structured training programmes that cover the learner's four-year advanced apprenticeship training programme. These training programmes have clear learning objectives for each of the areas in which the learner will work and are linked to the occupational standards required to achieve the NVQ. Good training is provided in the workplace for the learners to develop their practical skills and they have good opportunities for applying these skills using a wide range of good quality tools, equipment and machinery. Health and safety are well managed and learners are quick to learn and demonstrate good practical skills, enabling them to work on complex tasks with little supervision. Encouraged by employers, learners develop self-confidence and the ability to be self-critical about their completed work.
11. Key skills' training is good and well integrated with the engineering programme. This is identified as a strength in the self-assessment report. Learners benefit from a dedicated training officer who visits them at work to support the development of key skills which are largely developed and reviewed in the workplace. Learners are encouraged to recognise appropriate opportunities for learning and development in the workplace. For



example, one learner presented a good review of tasks completed and was able to critically reflect on his own development and discuss his learning styles. Most learners have a good understanding of key skills. Appropriate provision for literacy, numeracy and language training is available if required.

12. Learners benefit from and value the very good support provided by training staff and employers at WATA. This is a strength identified in the self-assessment report. The provision of information, advice and guidance is good. Staff at WATA carry out frequent and regular visits to the workplace. They provide a personalised learning and assessment programme for apprentices and show a good understanding of the context of the individual workplace. Learners find the visits very helpful and the information and guidance they receive help them to progress. They are able to relate their work experience to the standards required to achieve the NVQ and also learn about future progression and career opportunities.
13. As well as the workplace visits, a reviewing officer meets each learner and employer every 12 weeks to carry out a progress review. These reviews are particularly thorough and help learners to develop a clear view of what they have achieved and what is required of them. The reviews include a very thorough revision of health and safety learning points and reinforce learners' understanding of equality of opportunity. Learners are fully involved in the reviews and employers contribute effectively. Learners can, and do, make contact with staff at any time. Good use is made of e-mail for reviewing and assessing work.
14. WATA has recently developed helpful resources to support learners. Learners are issued with a wall chart calendar which combines a progress overview with a record of planned visits from staff at WATA and other helpful tips and information. A passport-style record containing miniature copies of all certificated achievements to date provides apprentices with a good record of achievement and experience. Learners use this to evidence competence when moving around in companies or between sites. Learners receive good support in the workplace; employers provide good training opportunities and fully support the learning process. Learners benefit from working with experienced engineers who are able to coach and pass on their skills and knowledge. Employers encourage learners to attend off-the-job training and support their participation in higher level and additional courses.

## **Leadership and management**

**Good: Grade 2**

### **Equality of opportunity**

Contributory grade: Good: Grade 2

15. Leadership and management are good. The staff team are fully involved in strategic planning and are clear about the direction of the organisation and their own roles and responsibilities. A well-produced three-year development plan is in place and annual action plans are compiled to ensure progress towards agreed objectives and targets. Team meetings and whole-company days bring staff together to review progress against plans.

Staff are tasked with devising further, more specific action plans which ensures they have an investment in achieving the objectives. Teamwork is good and staff have a clear sense of purpose which focuses on meeting learners' needs. Internal communications are good. Staff are valued, involved and motivated to achieve. Their views and ideas are communicated regularly to senior management through the regular team and management meetings.

16. Management of subcontractors is particularly effective. WATA works very effectively in partnership with 14 colleges in the region to provide good quality off-the-job training. WATA has successfully implemented a range of systems and safeguards to ensure that the quality of training is of a consistently high standard and capable of improving. This strength is identified in the self-assessment report. Communication with all subcontractors is good and any issues are swiftly resolved. Well-specified agreements are in place with subcontractors and these are reviewed regularly to ensure all obligations are being met. Views are formally sought from learners twice a year about the quality of training and education they experience while at college. Learners value these opportunities to express their views. WATA manages their quality improvement arrangements with subcontractors well and this leads to improvements which directly benefit learners.
17. Promotion of equality of opportunity is good. A wide range of initiatives are in place and equality is well integrated with the organisation's policies and practices. Particularly good improvements have been made to the way in which learners develop their understanding about equality of opportunity and diversity. The development plan identifies the need to raise the proportion of under-represented groups on training programmes. This is regularly monitored and initiatives to promote diversity, such as encouraging women into engineering, are taken by the organisation. Equal opportunities are a standard agenda item at all meetings and staff are encouraged to suggest ways of breaking down barriers to under-represented groups. Both staff and learners have a good understanding of equal opportunities and comprehensive reviews of understanding take place during workplace reviews. WATA has conducted a detailed equal opportunities survey on all its workplace providers, who found it extremely valuable and the providers have been responsive to issues raised. Data analysis is generally good, but information about under-represented groups is not analysed to monitor their performance against other groups of learners.
18. Although a comprehensive range of feedback is collected from stakeholders it is not always sufficiently well analysed, as the self-assessment report recognises, to result in actions for improvement.

## What learners like:

- 'Very thorough training'
- 'Good opportunities'
- Well-organised programme with planned training at work
- Very good support, staff always available — 'Support that has allowed me to progress'
- 'Good equipment at college makes sure you are well trained'
- 'I am learning lots'
- The variety of activities at work
- 'They do push you'
- 'They communicate well'

## What learners think could improve:

- Earlier issue of NVQ portfolio and the standards
- Staffing problems at college

## Annex

## Learners' achievements

Success rates on work based learning apprenticeship programmes managed by WATA 2004 to 2006

Programme	End Year	Success rate	No. of learners*	Provider NVQ rate**	National NVQ rate**	Provider framework rate**	National framework rate**
Advanced Apprenticeships	03-04	overall	45	71	49	62	31
		timely	46	43	30	37	19
	04-05	overall	54	61	48	59	34
		timely	53	36	31	36	22
	05-06	overall	70	69	53	63	44
		timely	70	40	34	36	27
Apprenticeships	03-04	overall	24	67	47	50	32
		timely	23	9	24	4	16
	04-05	overall	26	73	51	58	39
		timely	22	36	29	27	22
	05-06	overall	11	64	58	55	52
		timely	9	33	38	33	34

\* Learners who leave later than originally planned are counted in the year they actually leave. This group of learners are then added to the learners who planned to complete in a given year and did so or left earlier than planned

\*\* National qualification success rates are calculated using LSC published data derived from the 'Individual Learning Record'