

Sandwell Training Association Limited

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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.

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), 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 & manufacturing technologies
- Construction, planning & the built environment
- Business, administration & law

Description of the provider

1. Sandwell Training Association Limited (STA) was established in 1963 as an engineering employer group training association. The company is limited by guarantee and is a registered charity. It has two training sites in the West Midlands and provides apprentice and advanced apprentice training for young people and Train to Gain training for employed adults. Learners take national vocational qualifications (NVQs) as well as key skills awards and technical certificates. Areas of learning include engineering and manufacturing technologies; business, administration and law; retail and commercial enterprise; information and communication technology (ICT); and construction, planning and the built environment. STA has 353 learners. Of these, 105 are completing apprenticeships and 248 are on Train to Gain courses. Learners on ICT and retail courses were not inspected due to the small numbers in these areas, however, some were included in the sample of learners seen by inspectors.
2. STA is managed by a council of management, elected annually from its membership of local employers. The management team consists of the chief executive and five senior managers. They have responsibility for all aspects of the company's day-to-day management. Eighteen full-time staff are involved in training and assessment. Training is also subcontracted to Dudley College and Wolverhampton College for technical certificate courses and there are four assessors subcontracted for the construction courses. STA funds its apprenticeship training through a contract with the Black Country LSC. The Train to Gain work is contracted through the Black Country Training Group consortium. STA also provides private training for local businesses, however, the vast majority of its work is government funded.
3. The Black Country comprises the boroughs of Sandwell, Dudley, Walsall and Wolverhampton. It is an area of social deprivation with low standards of housing and education. The region is classed as having multiple deprivations, with all boroughs but Dudley in the top 30 of the most disadvantaged. The Black Country has a higher proportion of ethnic minorities than the West Midlands or the rest of the UK. In addition there is a small but growing number of asylum seekers in all boroughs, and a significant traveller community. GCSE attainment, while improving recently, is still below the national average. Overall achievement in Sandwell is lower than the rest of the Black Country. Of school leavers entering employment (12.8%), 32.7% are in jobs with no training. Unemployment in the Black Country (5.2%) is higher than the national average. Long-term unemployment is also above the national average.

Summary of grades awarded

Effectiveness of provision		Satisfactory: Grade 3
Work-based learning	Contributory grade: Satisfactory: Grade 3	
Train to Gain	Contributory grade: Good: Grade 2	
Capacity to improve		Satisfactory: Grade 3
Achievement and standards		Satisfactory: Grade 3
Work-based learning	Contributory grade: Satisfactory: Grade 3	
Train to Gain	Contributory grade: Good: Grade 2	
Quality of provision		Satisfactory: Grade 3
Work-based learning	Contributory grade: Satisfactory: Grade 3	
Train to Gain	Contributory grade: Good: Grade 2	
Leadership and management		Satisfactory: Grade 3
Work-based learning	Contributory grade: Satisfactory: Grade 3	
Train to Gain	Contributory grade: Good: Grade 2	
Equality of opportunity		Contributory grade: Satisfactory: Grade 3

Sector subject area

Engineering & manufacturing technologies		Satisfactory: Grade 3
Work-based learning	Contributory grade: Satisfactory: Grade 3	
Train to Gain	Contributory grade: Good: Grade 2	
Construction, planning & the built environment		Good: Grade 2
Train to Gain	Contributory grade: Good: Grade 2	
Business, administration & law		Satisfactory: Grade 3
Work-based learning	Contributory grade: Satisfactory: Grade 3	
Train to Gain	Contributory grade: Good: Grade 2	

Overall judgement

Effectiveness of provision

Satisfactory: Grade 3

Train to Gain

Contributory grade: Good: Grade 2

4. The overall effectiveness of the provision is satisfactory. Achievements and standards, the quality of provision, leadership and management and the vocational training provision are all satisfactory. Equality of opportunity is satisfactory. The effectiveness of the Train to Gain provision is good. Achievements and standards, quality of provision and leadership and management are all good for the Train to Gain programmes.

Capacity to improve

Satisfactory: Grade 3

5. The organisation has identified key areas for improvement in addressing learner framework completion. These weaknesses have been addressed successfully with subsequent improvements to both framework completions and timely achievement. STA recognises it has still some way to go with regard to quality processes and the need to provide a more holistic and learner focused view of the provision. Many improvement activities are not fully reflected in the self-assessment process which is inclusive but does not sufficiently draw together information from all quality processes. The self-assessment report is brief, insufficiently self-critical and lacks information on the quality of the learner experience across all key training processes. The provider does not evaluate the effectiveness of quality procedures. The inspection team identified the need for the organisation to formalise more fully its improvement processes but has confidence in the capacity of the organisation to both manage change and further improve framework completion.

Key strengths

- Good training and success rates on Train to Gain
- Skills acquisition and progression opportunities in the workplace
- First year off-the-job training
- Good support
- Effective employer engagement
- Effective management of change
- Good business planning

Key areas for improvement

- Poor achievement and slow progress of apprenticeship programmes
- The late introduction of Level 2 key skills
- Insufficient co-ordination of on- and off-the-job training
- Inadequate initial assessment
- Poor target-setting
- Insufficient monitoring of subcontracted provision

- Poor implementation of quality procedures
- Promotion and reinforcement of equality and diversity
- Sharing of good practice

Main findings

Achievement and standards

Satisfactory: Grade 3

Train to Gain

Contributory grade: Good: Grade 2

6. Achievement and standards are satisfactory. Success rates for Train to Gain learners are good. Seventy two per cent of learners who enrolled in August 2007, with potential to achieve within their planned end date, achieved their qualification. Apprentice framework success rates show a year on year improvement to 59% in 2006/07 which is around the national average. However, advanced apprenticeship framework success rates are well below national average. Overall success rates for apprenticeship framework completions show an improving trend from a very low base of 17% in 2004/05 to 55% in 2006/07, just below national average. Achievement of the full apprenticeship framework has been slow but has much improved. Some poorly performing subcontracted provision, now terminated, has impacted on overall success rates. The apprenticeship programme is 30% of the total provision. Self-assessment is used to compare data for retention and achievements and is now showing improvement.

Quality of provision

Satisfactory: Grade 3

Train to Gain

Contributory grade: Good: Grade 2

7. The quality of provision is satisfactory. Train to Gain provision is good. Training in construction is good, as is the off-the-job training in the first year of engineering. Initial assessment is weak in construction and there are inadequate arrangements for identifying additional learning support in business, administration and law. Co-ordination of on- and off-the-job training is weak in engineering and key skills are introduced late in the programme. Engineering, construction, business, administration and law courses are good in meeting employer and learner needs. Initial advice and guidance is poor in construction but good for business learners. Management of the area of learning is good in construction. Annual self-assessment provides a good focus for quality improvement opportunities across all courses.

Leadership and management

Satisfactory: Grade 3

Train to Gain

Contributory grade: Good: Grade 2

Equality of opportunity

Contributory grade: Satisfactory: Grade 3

8. STA manages change effectively. This was not recognised in the self-assessment report. The chief executive of STA has provided good leadership to support radical restructuring of the organisation and changes to working practices. Inherited financial problems have been addressed. Support for staff has been positive with increased staff commitment and focus on learner achievement. Staff value the open and consultative management style. Improved communication and involvement has led to more focused courses that stretch learners to achieve within planned timescales.
9. Business planning is good. This was not recognised in the self-assessment report. Business plans clearly identify the role, direction and future of the organisation, although implementation has been limited by financial constraints. Development strategies are drawn from management meetings and reflect national and regional perspectives. The appraisal system is clearly linked to business objectives. STA has a good awareness of future needs and changes in industry practice and this helps STA staff to keep learners well informed and to ensure that the courses are relevant and up to date.
10. The provider has taken a number of good actions that have resulted in improvements. This was partially recognised in the self-assessment report. There is an improving trend in achievements and timely success rates. Staff have introduced the use of e-portfolios, in-house delivery of technical certificates, regular standardisation meetings, key skills on-line testing in the workplace and improvements to inductions to further support learner progress. Forward planning of framework achievement dates and unit monitoring systems has meant overall progress is more closely monitored. This has led to improvements in retention and achievement.
11. There is good support from the council of management. This was recognised in the self-assessment report. The council of management effectively monitors company performance and provides challenge and support. The group shares its knowledge and expertise in running small businesses and has been particularly supportive in planning and managing financial aspects. Learners benefit from the association's strong links with local employers and advice and guidance on industry practice and requirements. Train to Gain programmes provide good training and qualifications that motivate learners and provide them with good opportunities to update their industrial knowledge and skills.
12. Staff appraisal, development and training are satisfactory. Most staff have teaching qualifications or are working towards one. STA has a schedule of regular planned meetings at all levels with set agendas and minutes. Several new staff, who are motivated to improve the training and course achievements, have been recruited in the last 12 months,. Partnership arrangements, employer engagement and internal verification are also satisfactory.
13. Subcontracted provision is not sufficiently monitored. This was not identified in the self-assessment report. Review meetings take place with informal discussions between managers but there is no formal reporting procedure. STA has been slow in responding to poor subcontracted provision, which was subsequently terminated, resulting in a negative impact on overall success rates.
14. The provider makes insufficient use of data to plan and manage programmes. This was not identified in the self-assessment report. There is no detailed analysis of data to identify priorities and targets for recruitment, retention and achievement. Data is not used to plan

and manage programmes. STA does not analyse data to identify the performance of different groups of learners and makes little use of regional and national benchmarks.

15. STA recognises in the self-assessment report that there is a lack of rigour in implementation of key quality processes. STA has a full range of policies and procedures but these are not used to maximum effect. Development and action planning are not thorough enough. Plans lack milestones, clear actions and implementation detail. Staff are not always clear of their role in improvement. The progress of the development plan is not adequately monitored and updated. Minutes of meetings lack actions. Priority actions in the business plan are not in the development plan. Weak areas in the self-assessment report such as quality issues, initial assessment and reinforcement of equality and diversity have continued over the past four years.
16. Learner feedback is collected after induction and on exit but not sufficiently analysed to identify areas for improvement. Employer and stakeholder feedback is not collected formally. The provider makes insufficient use of observations to improve key training processes and raise the overall quality of teaching and learning. The process focuses on staff performance rather than the quality of teaching and learning. Subcontracted training is not checked by STA. The organisation has investors in people and matrix accreditation.
17. Learners receive suitable information and training about equality and diversity during their initial induction. They are given clear information about their rights and responsibilities. Copies of the STA equal opportunities policy and grievance and discipline procedures are provided and explained at induction. Learners are questioned at quarterly progress reviews about their treatment. They have a good awareness of their rights and responsibilities. However, there is insufficient promotion and reinforcement of equality and diversity during the progress reviews and comments written on the review forms are often minimal. Most STA staff have not attended any recent update or awareness training about equality and diversity. There is good representation of minority ethnic groups on the programmes. Women are under-represented in engineering, although there is a good gender balance on other programmes. The self-assessment process has provided managers with good opportunities to review and improve the provision. This has resulted in improved outcomes on apprenticeship programmes and helped to enhance the good Train to Gain provision.

What learners like:

- 'I look forward to going to STA and meeting other learners'
- Getting a qualification
- 'I gain good experience and a chance to do qualifications'
- The good support from assessors — 'STA come to see me regularly and I can contact them when I need to'
- STA helps to find jobs on sites
- 'I like the programme (Train to Gain)'
- 'Meeting new people gives you confidence'
- The good environment at the training centre
- The practical training at the training centre
- Assessment is focused on real jobs

What learners think could improve:

- 'The course could be done more quickly'
- STA could market themselves better
- Provide vending machines
- The tools in the workshop need replacing
- Reintroduce industrial visits
- Key skills should be done sooner
- Staff shortages can cause disruptions

Sector subject areas

Engineering & manufacturing technologies

Satisfactory: Grade 3

Work-based learning
Train to Gain

Contributory grade: Satisfactory: Grade 3
Contributory grade: Good: Grade 2

Context

18. There are a total of 193 learners on engineering programmes. Forty are on apprenticeship frameworks at NVQ Level 2, 45 are doing the advanced apprenticeship at NVQ Level 3 and 108 are on Train to Gain engineering programmes. The apprentices usually spend their first year at STA's engineering training centre developing basic engineering skills and completing their apprenticeship programme. However, STA offer an alternative day or block release off-the-job attendance mode for any employed apprentices. Most of the apprentices gain employment during their first year and progress to an advanced apprenticeship. STA provides training and assessment for key skills and the NVQ. Local colleges are subcontracted to provide training for a technical certificate on a day release basis. Train to Gain learners work at a range of engineering companies. The Train to Gain programmes last from six to twelve months and require a taught input of 20 hours at Level 2 and 70 hours at Level 3. There are 87 Train to Gain learners at Level 2 and 21 at Level 3. Twelve are on mainstream Level 2 engineering programmes, 82 are on business improvement techniques Level 2, and 14 on business improvement techniques at Level 3. Training and assessment is provided in the workplace by STA's staff and contracted specialist tutors and assessors.

Strengths

- High success rates on Train to Gain
- Good skills acquisition and progression opportunities in the workplace
- Very good outcomes from business improvement techniques courses
- Good first year off-the-job training

Areas for improvement

- Poor achievement of apprenticeship programmes
- Slow learner progress
- Late introduction of Level 2 key skills
- Insufficient co-ordination of on- and off-the-job training

Achievement and standards

19. Overall achievement and standards are satisfactory across apprenticeship and Train to Gain programmes. Achievement of apprenticeships has been poor and courses have taken too long to complete, however this is now improving significantly. In 2004/05 just 4% of apprentices completed their framework, but the following year, this improved to 54%. So far, up to period 12 of the current year, 56% have completed their framework and there are more apprentices on target to complete this year. Advanced apprentices have gone from 14% apprenticeship framework completion in 2004/05 to 46% in 2005/6 and at period 12 this year they are at 33%, however, many are still taking too long to complete.
20. More than two thirds of the learners are on Train to Gain programmes, which have high success rates. This strength was identified in the self-assessment report. Of those Train to Gain learners who have reached their end date, 76% have completed their intended qualification. Business improvement techniques Level 3 has good positive outcomes. Completion of the programme is good and 84% have achieved the qualification so far. Of the 43 Train to Gain learners who have reached their planned end dates, 36 have completed.
21. Advanced apprentices are employed in a variety of engineering companies across the West Midlands, where they acquire good engineering skills and have good opportunities to progress in the business. Many ex-apprentices are now managers or directors of engineering companies and some have gone on to achieve higher qualifications up to degree level. This strength was identified in the self-assessment report.

Quality of provision

22. The first year apprentice off-the-job training at the STA engineering training centre is good. Training is well planned and closely monitored. The training centre is well maintained and equipped to a good standard. Employers say that the training centre provides good foundation training that prepares learners well for when they move into a work production situation. This was partially identified in the self-assessment report.
23. All of the learners' NVQ portfolios examined are of a good standard and contain good quality evidence. The evidence is diverse, and in depth. The portfolios contain actual materials from the workplace production areas. The portfolios are well referenced and show evidence of ongoing assessment and internal verification. Internal verification is well planned and thorough.
24. Learning materials used on the business improvements techniques programme are of a high standard. The programme content is well planned and challenges and stimulates the learner. There is good teaching on the programmes. Learner files are up to date and contain all relevant documents. Learning plans show evidence of updating and the review documentation is thorough and regularly completed.

Leadership and management

25. Progress is slow on all engineering programmes. This was not identified in the self-assessment report. The monitoring of learners' progress is ineffective. Apart from the first year off-the-job apprentices, there is no progress monitored against agreed milestones to allow corrective action to be taken soon enough to be effective. Advanced apprentices level 2 key skills are introduced too late in the programme, often when apprentices are

close to completing their NVQ Level 3 and technical certificates, and have additional work priorities. This adds to the slow progress apprentices are making. The progress of learners on Train to Gain performing manufacturing operations Level 2 qualifications is also slow; only 11% completed on time. Most learners are with one company and there is limited opportunity to gather evidence toward the qualification. The learners are on production work and can only gather evidence when a breakdown occurs, this is not predictable. The company Human Resource manager is fully aware of this and STA staff have been very proactive in trying to improve this situation.

26. There is insufficient co-ordination between on- and off-the-job training for advanced apprentices. Employers are not made aware of what learners do at college every week. Where there is a training plan for the workplace, it does not take into account the NVQ, key skills or technical certificate requirements. As a result there is no attempt to link the learners training requirements to maximise their learning opportunities and plan for assessment. This was not identified in the self-assessment report.
27. Support for literacy, numeracy or other identified additional learning needs is satisfactory. Advanced apprentices are usually recruited with good school grades, as the mathematics requirements for their technical certificate are quite high. However, the colleges provide additional support if required. Staff at STA provide limited additional support for numeracy or literacy but more specialised support is bought in if needed. Initial advice and guidance is also satisfactory.

Construction, planning & the built environment

Train to Gain

Good: Grade 2

Context

28. Sixty-eight learners are following a Train to Gain programme in construction lasting between six and twelve months. The qualification is a Level 2 NVQ in plant operations. The programme requires 20 hours teaching to be delivered. All learning and assessment is done on the job by four subcontracted assessors/trainers. Learners are employed in small to medium sized construction companies working on civil and groundwork contracts.

Strengths

- High success rates
- Good training
- Very effective employer engagement
- Good operational management

Areas for improvement

- Insufficient information advice and guidance
- Inadequate initial assessment
- Poor target-setting
- Insufficient promotion of equality of opportunity

Achievement and standards

29. Success rates are good. This programme only started in November 2006. Of the 42 who started in the last year, 82% have achieved and all did so within their planned end date. Nine per cent left early and there are still 9% continuing past their course planned end date who could achieve. This strength is recognised in the self-assessment report. The quality of the learners' work is satisfactory. They are experienced operators who are working competently on site with the appropriate attention to health and safety. Learners develop good technical knowledge and practical skills to an acceptable industrial standard.

Quality of provision

30. Training is good. It is well planned and the materials used are suitable and clearly set out. All training is given on the job. Set assignments relate well to the environment in which learners are actually working. Learners receive good support from trainers, but only after they have been challenged to think issues through for themselves. Learners' understanding is checked. Learners are experienced operators, but acknowledge that the training often fills in the gaps of existing knowledge and makes them realise that they do not know everything. The training is delivered well and enjoyed by the learners. Trainers are well qualified, with relevant industrial experience. Portfolios contain a good diverse range of evidence, including the outcomes from training sessions and some electronically held evidence. This strength was not recognised in the self-assessment report.
31. Learners receive insufficient information, advice and guidance. Most learners were directed onto the programme by their employer. Employers get good information, advice and guidance from the provider. However, learners were unclear as to why they were doing the qualification. Information, advice and guidance is provided as part of the learner induction session, when most emphasis is placed on explaining the programme rather than on providing the necessary information advice and guidance about why they have been selected for the course and what the long term benefits will be. This area for improvement was not recognised in the self-assessment report.
32. Initial assessment to identify support needed for literacy and numeracy is inadequate. Testing for literacy or numeracy needs does not take place. The only approach to literacy and numeracy support, when learners are asked the general question as to whether they need any help with their mathematics or English, is unsatisfactory. The provider believes that employers are reluctant to subject staff to tests. However, they have not attempted to sell the benefits of identifying support to enhance the learner's ability to achieve the NVQ. This area for improvement was not recognised in the self-assessment report.
33. Target-setting for learners is poor. Individual learning plans do not contain any progress milestones or target dates for their completion. Actions are not clearly set and given to learners although some actions are entered on the visit log. Progress reviews have insufficiently demanding or time bound targets and no targets are clearly identified at the beginning of the programme. Learners are unclear about the progress they are making. They receive no record of their progress or a copy of their individual learning plan. This area for improvement is not recognised in the self-assessment report.
34. Employer engagement is good. The provider has developed a close working relationship with employers. They have instigated comprehensive training matrixes with employers to

identify all the skills that their employees need now, and in the future, to allow the businesses to progress. Additional qualifications needed by employees have been accurately identified and delivered by the provider, who also looks at any possible sources of additional funding to assist the employer. Learners are able to obtain or retain their appropriate site safety cards and have access to major sites for work as a consequence of having the Level 2 NVQ in plant operations. Programmes are carefully set at either six or twelve month duration to allow the learner to achieve the competencies needed for the range of machines they need to operate. Good assistance is given to employers in helping them develop essential health and safety and equality of opportunity policies and procedures. This strength was not recognised in the self-assessment report.

Leadership and management

35. The manager responsible for this programme has regular weekly meetings with the team of four subcontracted assessors/trainers. Each assessor has a comprehensive service level agreement, that is regularly reviewed, and has a professional code of conduct to follow. The manager observes training sessions and assessments for improvement purposes. Good internal verification arrangements are in place. Thorough quarterly standardisation of assessment meetings, with minutes and action plans, take place. Rigorous verification sampling plans are in place and assessors receive good critical feedback from the internal verifiers. Targets are clearly set for learner achievement rates. This strength was not recognised in the self-assessment report.
36. Quality assurance and quality improvement arrangements are satisfactory. Internal verification arrangements are thorough. The monitoring of subcontractors is good. However, the use of learner surveys is underdeveloped. There is insufficient monitoring of some procedures. Learners do not have any recorded documentation. The self-assessment report made insufficient judgements and was too descriptive.
37. Equality of opportunity is covered at induction but in insufficient detail. There is inadequate reinforcement thereafter. Equality of opportunity is insufficiently reinforced during progress reviews. Discussions have insufficient depth and checking of learners understanding. Employers are vetted to ensure that they have appropriate equality of opportunity policies and they can be supported to develop a suitable policy if necessary.

Business, administration & law

Satisfactory: Grade 3

Work-based learning
Train to Gain

Contributory grade: Satisfactory: Grade 3
Contributory grade: Good: Grade 2

Context

38. Eighty six learners are currently following the apprenticeship and Train to Gain programmes. Seven are advanced apprentices, 13 are apprentices and 66 are Train to Gain learners. Learners undertake training in the occupational areas of Business Administration, Customer Services and Team Leading at Levels 2 and 3. Recruitment of learners is through direct marketing to employers, adverts in the local papers, 14 to 19 initiatives, Connexions and referrals by employers and existing or previous learners.

Strengths

- Flexible approach to meet learners and employers training needs
- Good support

Areas for improvement

- Inadequate arrangements for identifying additional needs
- Poor success rates for advanced apprentices

Achievement and standards

39. The success rates for advanced apprentices are poor and have decreased from 31% in 2005/06 to 28% in 2006/2007. However, the success rates for apprentices are satisfactory at 65% in 2006/07 and have improved from 34% in 2005/06. Train to Gain achievement rates are satisfactory with 56% having achieved their qualification within the agreed time. All of the remaining learners, due to achieve by end of December 2007, were on target to complete on time.
40. Apprentices develop good relevant vocational and employability skills in the workplace. They undertake a variety of tasks and the standard of their work is satisfactory. They are well motivated and learn to work independently as they gain experience and become more confident. They recognise the importance of good work ethics and showing respect to colleagues as well as internal and external customers. Train to Gain learners become more aware of the range of tasks that they carry out and the importance of following correct procedures and processes.
41. Learners achieve additional qualifications in areas such as first aid and ICT and participate in employers' in-house training courses.

Quality of provision

42. Apprentices have a four-week induction period with STA during which time they are introduced to the elements of their framework, familiarised with the world of work and given training in a range of ICT packages, telephone skills, health and safety and equal opportunities. On- and off-the-job training is integrated and learners are able to make clear links with the training they receive and how to put it in practice in the workplace. Learners work is well supervised and monitored. They receive coaching, help and advice from workplace supervisors and STA staff to enable them to achieve. They are provided access to on-line learning materials as well as portals and blogs to communicate with each other or with STA staff. However, workplace supervisors and line managers are not always involved in formal learner progress reviews. STA staff listen to and act upon requests from learners and employers for specific or additional training requirements. On occasions arrangements have been made for learners to undertake additional qualifications to help in their personal lives or to complete their framework if away from the workplace for an extended period of time.
43. Assessors use individual learning plans to suitably plan training and monitor progress. Timescales and training needs are discussed and agreed with the learners and their line

managers. The skills and knowledge learners develop are linked well to their framework or NVQ's. Learning resources are satisfactory.

44. Initial assessment is carried out through interview, individual discussion with the learner and through tests for literacy and numeracy. English for speakers of other languages (ESOL) learners, or for those with literacy or numeracy skills below Level 3, are referred to providers with the expertise and resources to support them. Initial assessment identifies learners' prior attainment and experience. However, staff do not have the skills and knowledge required to identify some additional needs such as dyslexia and have not had any training or development opportunities to gain the skills and knowledge necessary to identify such needs.
45. Learners receive good support from STA staff and employers. Staff make arrangements for learners to undertake learning at a time and place to suit the needs of the learners and employers, including providing facilities for distance learning and individual off-the-job training in the workplace. Employers provide time and resources in the workplace for learners to work on their portfolios and meet with assessors or tutors to undertake training and assessment. One employer has installed a separate PC in the board room so that learners within the company can access the internet. If STA do not have the resources or expertise to meet the learners needs they refer the learners to suitable specialist organisations. Useful web addresses and other contact details are included in the portal and blog areas of the on line learning materials available to all learners.

Leadership and management

46. Leadership and management are satisfactory. Staff are appropriately qualified and experienced with regular opportunities for undertaking professional development activities to maintain occupational competence. Work loads are allocated taking the assessors' and learners' location and travelling time into account as well as other responsibilities of the assessors.
47. Progress monitoring and monitoring systems are in place to improve learner success rates. This was a weakness in the previous inspection. Assessment and internal verification arrangements are satisfactory and meet awarding bodies requirements.
48. Equal opportunities training forms part of the induction and the quarterly reviews, however, learners roles and responsibilities in relation to equality and diversity are not sufficiently reinforced and learners lack understanding about the wider areas of diversity.
49. Staff were actively involved in the self-assessment process. However, the resulting report is not sufficiently evaluative and self-critical. A flexible approach, to meet learners and employers training needs, was identified in the self-assessment report.

Annex

Learners' achievements

Success rates on **work-based learning apprenticeship programmes** managed by the provider 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	27	41%	48%	26%	31%
		Timely	19	11%	30%	11%	19%
	04-05	Overall	24	38%	48%	13%	34%
		Timely	31	13%	31%	3%	21%
	05-06	Overall	27	41%	54%	37%	44%
		Timely	33	21%	34%	18%	27%
Apprenticeships	03-04	Overall	84	58%	47%	24%	32%
		Timely	86	35%	24%	5%	16%
	04-05	Overall	120	35%	50%	18%	38%
		Timely	147	19%	29%	7%	22%
	05-06	Overall	119	52%	58%	44%	53%
		Timely	116	29%	38%	25%	33%

* 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

** College and national qualification success rates are calculated using LSC published data derived from the 'Individual Learning Record'