

Matrix Training and Development 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 and manufacturing technologies
- Business, administration and law

Description of the provider

1. Matrix Training and Development Limited (Matrix) is based in Telford in Shropshire. The head office is in Telford and there are offices on the premises of a large manufacturing company, which provides for many of its learners. It was formed in the year 2000 and has contracts with Shropshire Learning and Skills Council (LSC) to provide engineering and manufacturing apprenticeships. Matrix also contracts with three consortiums, Worcester College, Shrewsbury College, and Action for Employment to provide Train to Gain programmes in skills for life, business administration, manufacturing, supervisory management and business improvement techniques.
2. Learners are based at employers' sites in Telford and across the West Midlands. Matrix has 147 learners. There are 14 learners on engineering and manufacturing apprenticeships, 77 learners are on National Vocational Qualifications (NVQs) Level 2 Performing Manufacturing Operations through Train to Gain, 35 learners are on business administration and management Train to Gain courses and nine learners are on NVQ Level 2 business improvement techniques Train to Gain courses. Twenty of the Train to Gain learners are also on skills for life literacy and/or numeracy courses. There are another 12 Train to Gain learners on distribution and warehousing courses, however, due to the low number they were not included in this inspection.
3. Matrix has a senior management team of two directors, a quality systems co-ordinator and a company secretary. The company also employs six work-based assessors, a marketing specialist and an administrator.
4. The unemployment rate in the West Midlands is 3.1%, compared with 5.3% nationally. The proportion of the population from minority ethnic groups in the West Midlands is 14.6%, compared with 9.1% nationally. The last two years have shown a significant rise in migrant workers in the Telford area from former eastern block countries.

Summary of grades awarded

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

Sector subject areas

Engineering and manufacturing technologies	Good: Grade 2
Business, administration and law	Satisfactory: Grade 3

Overall judgement

Effectiveness of provision

Good: Grade 2

Work-based learning
Train to Gain

Contributory grade: Good: Grade 2
Contributory grade: Good: Grade 2

5. Overall effectiveness is good. Achievements and standards and the quality of the provision are good. Provision for engineering and manufacturing apprenticeships and Train to Gain programmes is good. For business administration Train to Gain programmes, it is satisfactory. Leadership and management are good and equality of opportunity is satisfactory.

Capacity to improve

Good: Grade 2

6. Matrix has demonstrated a good capacity to improve. Since the previous inspection in 2004, Matrix now offers business administration, supervisory management and skills for life training. There have been good improvements made since the previous inspection. Most of the strengths have been built on and identified again at this inspection and most weaknesses rectified. Additional strengths have also been added. Success rates on engineering and manufacturing programmes are high. The business administration programmes have satisfactory success rates.
7. The self-assessment process and the accuracy of the self-assessment report are good. Key performance data and the views of staff, learners and employers provide the basis to make judgements that are mainly accurate, evaluative and clearly linked to a quality improvement plan. Inspectors agreed with most strengths, the areas for improvement and grades. The self-assessment action plan contains suitable actions to rectify areas for improvement and it is monitored and updated at management and team meetings.

Key strengths

- High retention and achievement (engineering & manufacturing)
- Very effective programmes that meet the needs of learners and employers
- Good development of personal and vocational skills
- Good arrangements to support additional learning needs
- Very effective employer partnerships
- Open and supportive management
- Good staff development
- Good quality assurance process leading to improvements
- Good self-assessment process

Key areas for improvement

- Slow progress by some learners

- Insufficient planning for assessment
- Underdeveloped use of targets for learners
- Insufficient accurate monitoring of learner progress
- Insufficient promotion of equality and diversity

Main findings

Achievement and standards

Good: Grade 2

Work-based learning
Train to Gain

Contributory grade: Good: Grade 2
Contributory grade: Good: Grade 2

8. Achievements and standards are good for both Train to Gain learners and apprentices. Retention is high for all areas and success rates are high for learners on engineering and manufacturing programmes, however, many learners make slow progress. Engineering and manufacturing apprentices develop good workplace skills. Business administration learners develop good personal and vocational skills.
9. Train to Gain learners are well motivated and develop good self-esteem. They improve their confidence and some of their learners' numeracy and literacy skills as a result of their programmes of training. Business administration learners develop good skills that they effectively use at work.

Quality of provision

Good: Grade 2

Work-based learning
Train to Gain

Contributory grade: Good: Grade 2
Contributory grade: Good: Grade 2

10. The quality of the provision is good overall. Teaching, training and learning are good. Managers of the formally taught lessons observe to improve their quality. Inspectors broadly agreed with the lesson observation grades. There is a good range of learning resources that staff use effectively to support learning. Learners receive effective individual learning support from their assessors in the workplace. They enjoy their courses, are enthusiastic and often keen to gain further knowledge and qualifications. Assessment is regular and frequent in all areas and there is good use of observation by qualified assessors to assess learner competence in the workplace.
11. Assessors carry out progress reviews each time they visit learners at work, which is usually every two to three weeks. Workplace supervisors try to attend each progress review and agree targets for learners to complete before the next visit. Learners' progress is checked at the visits, however, staff at Matrix do not usually use the review to promote equality and diversity issues. Assessors effectively check at progress reviews on how learners are treated at work.
12. Matrix response to the needs of learners and employers is good. Matrix has developed very effective employer partnerships that impact positively on learners. Staff work from offices at their main employers site and this allows many learners to have close contact with their assessors. The employer also encourages Matrix to bring other employers to the site to see how a high performing manufacturing company operates and to share best practice. Engineering programmes are very effective and meet the needs of learners and employers by developing skills and qualifications beyond those required for the programmes. There is good support for employers with business administration learners

helping them to develop their policies and processes and by providing additional training for staff additional to the funded programmes.

13. Support and guidance for learners overall are good and the support for learners identified as having additional learning needs is also good. Assessors regularly check learners' welfare. Induction helps learners settle into their training effectively.

Leadership and management

Good: Grade 2

Work-based learning

Contributory grade: Good: Grade 2

Train to Gain

Contributory grade: Good: Grade 2

Equality of opportunity

Contributory grade: Satisfactory: Grade 3

14. Leadership and management are good. Matrix has an open and supportive management style. The company welcomes and encourages constructive comments from staff to promote continuous improvements. Senior managers and directors work alongside staff and promote good working relationships. Staff development is good. Staff receive an appraisal each year with their manager to identify development needs and to discuss job requirements. Staff attend courses and gain qualifications, many of which are beyond what are needed for the job role.
15. Matrix employs a quality systems co-ordinator who has developed effective quality assurance procedures and policies. These are regularly internally audited to check consistency of application and to change and update as necessary. The emphasis on quality assuring key processes has resulted in quality improvements in several areas of the business through the regular checking and subsequent improving of the quality procedures.
16. Slow progress has been an issue for learners since the previous inspection in 2004. Matrix regularly collects information about learners' progression and managers use this information to monitor their progress, although the data is subjective and can be inaccurate. There are no measures to show how each learner is progressing at the different stages of their training. Managers are unable to assess if progress is sufficient or not in the absence of accurate information to compare against expected outcomes. Despite this issue, most learners complete their training although many achieve this well after the expected completion date.
17. Equality of opportunity is satisfactory. Matrix makes good use of equal opportunities data to monitor recruitment and achievement by gender and ethnicity. The proportion of learners from minority ethnic groups significantly exceeds that in the local community. Matrix checks the representation of minority groups in employers' workforces at initial meetings. When it is low, employers are encouraged to consider making changes to their recruitment arrangements. Matrix has appropriate policies on equality and diversity. The provider adequately checks employers' policies before the start of training but Matrix does not formally record this information. When policies do not exist or are inadequate, Matrix supports employers to develop them appropriately. Matrix checks that employers' premises meet the requirements of the Disabilities Discrimination Act although this is unrecorded. Learning resources and marketing materials reflect the ethnic diversity of

local communities. Matrix has good learning resources for equality and diversity. They provide some health and safety information in different languages to learners.

18. The promotion of equality and diversity is insufficient. Matrix has recognised this in their self-assessment report. Equality of opportunity is a regular agenda item in team meetings but this is mainly to review any complaints or concerns. Not enough discussion takes place on promotion. Staff have received some recent training to raise their awareness of equality and diversity issues but not in how to promote equality and diversity to learners and employers. Learners receive appropriate information about equality and diversity and their rights and responsibilities during induction. However, subsequent monitoring at reviews does not adequately raise awareness of learners understanding of equality and diversity.

What learners like:

- Helpful, knowledgeable, accessible, friendly, encouraging, motivating and patient assessors
- 'The assessor makes me feel comfortable and confident'
- 'It's made me stop and think a bit more'
- Good to be able to do an NVQ on the job
- 'I'm much better at dealing with people and problems'
- Gaining a qualification at work
- The practical hands on approach to NVQ
- 'I pay more attention to health and safety'
- 'This will be my first qualification'
- 'The good support to improve my mathematics'

What learners think could improve:

- 'It seems to have taken a long time. Perhaps it could be done a bit quicker'
- Further opportunities to progress onto higher level qualifications
- 'Work sometimes gets in the way of the NVQ!'
- More frequent visits by assessors

Sector subject areas

Engineering and manufacturing technologies

Good: Grade 2

Context

19. Matrix offers Level 2 programmes in engineering, technology and manufacturing apprenticeships. Two apprentices are working towards an NVQ Level 2 in performing engineering operations and 12 apprentices working towards an NVQ Level 2 in performing manufacturing operations (PMO). There are 77 Train to Gain learners working towards an NVQ Level 2 in performing manufacturing operations and nine Train to Gain learners working towards an NVQ Level 2 in business improvement techniques (BIT). Six full time assessors and a basic skills trainer work with an internal verifier and an administrator to provide these courses. All PMO training and assessment takes place in the learner's workplace. At the time of inspection, 21% of learners were female.

Strengths

- High success rates
- Particularly good assessment
- Good use of very effective learning resources
- Very effective programmes that meet the needs of learners and employers

Areas for improvement

- Slow progress by some learners
- Insufficient ongoing reinforcement of qualification requirements

Achievement and standards

20. Achievement and standards are good. Success rates are high and most learners complete their planned programmes. Framework success rates for apprenticeships are high. In 2004/05, this was 69% and in 2005/06 it was 67%. Data that has yet to be validated for 2006/07 shows that the success rate has increased to 92%. Achievement for the Train to Gain programme is also high. In 2004/05, this was 92%, in 2005/06, it was 85% and in 2006/07, it was 93%. The self-assessment report identified this strength.

21. The standard of learners work is good. Learners carry out work-based activities on industrial production and manufacturing processes competently and meet the regulatory and high demands of the employers' quality assurance systems. Engineering apprentices produce high standards of work in their training facility. For example, two apprentices produced good quality chessboard and chess pieces which are on display in their employer's reception area.

22. Progress for many learners is slow. For example, two engineering apprentices are four months into their third year and they have not yet completed their second year NVQ work. Current data identifies that only 49% of Train to Gain learners achieved their qualification on time in 2006/07. The self-assessment report recognises this area for improvement.

Quality of provision

23. The quality of the provision is good. Assessment of learners is particularly good. Assessment by direct observation in the workplace is frequent, and provides most of the evidence for learners' competence. Assessors give clear written and verbal feedback after each observation, which they discuss in detail with the learner. Assessors questioning techniques are very effective and draw out knowledge and understanding that may not be apparent during an observation. This is particularly helpful for learners who have been employed for several years but have not worked towards formal qualifications since leaving school.
24. There is good use of very effective learning resources with a wide range of available to trainers and assessors. Resources relate specifically to work processes. The learning materials for the BIT programme are particularly good and used very effectively. For example, in one training session, the effective use of these materials kept learners fully engaged and promoted valuable discussion. During individual coaching sessions, assessors use session plans effectively to develop the learners' knowledge of particular aspects of their qualification.
25. Apprenticeship and Train to Gain programmes benefit both learners and employers. Engineering apprentices' training leads to qualifications and skills beyond the NVQ requirements. Engineering apprentices achieve more than the mandatory NVQ units and progress onto higher national qualifications. They also benefit from many internal training programmes with their employer. Many manufacturing apprentices and Train to Gain learners look forward to achieving their first formal qualification and this inspires them to work hard.
26. Both learners and employers benefit from the emphasis placed on health and safety. Learners complete good-quality assignments to identify and record any incidents as part of the health and safety assessment for their NVQ. Learners report that the training in health and safety provided by Matrix has greatly increased their awareness about its importance. Learners also complete an assignment aimed at improving the work product or process. This strength was partially recognised in the self-assessment report.
27. Matrix has satisfactory arrangements to meet the support needs of learners. Learners value the support they receive during assignment work and during assessments completed in the workplace. Matrix provides additional literacy and numeracy support when needs are identified. This may be identified through formal initial assessment, during progress reviews, or through assignment work. Matrix is also able to provide some additional support through an external agency, particularly for language skills. Advice and guidance for learners is satisfactory.

Leadership and management

28. Leadership and management are good. Matrix communicates well with employers. Staff meetings are held every four weeks. Staff are aware of their roles and responsibilities; they are well motivated and committed to their roles. Matrix keeps employers well informed of learners' progress. Employers speak very well of Matrix, its staff and the support given to learners, although learners and employers do not have a good knowledge

about the qualification requirements. Learners and employers are not carrying out adequate planning for assessment visits and assessment opportunities are missed. This area for improvement was not identified in the self-assessment report. Internal verification is thorough and well established. All portfolios are internally verified at least twice during a learner's qualification.

29. Self-assessment is good. The self-assessment report was detailed and in the main accurate. Matrix identified all of the strengths identified by inspectors and one of the two areas for improvement.
30. Learners' understanding of equality of opportunity is satisfactory. Matrix introduces equal opportunities during induction and monitoring takes place at learners' progress reviews. In better reviews, assessors encourage learners to discuss subjects such as the impact of disability legislation on employers and harassment and bullying.

Business, administration and law

Satisfactory: Grade 3

Context

31. Matrix currently provides NVQ programmes for 35 Train to Gain learners, 29 on team leading, two on management Level 3 and four on administration Level 2. Eight learners receive training for skills for life. Training and assessment takes place in the workplace. Eight assessors, three of whom are also internal verifiers, provide the programmes of training. They report to the two directors who also internally verify programmes.

Strengths

- Good development of personal and vocational skills
- Good arrangements to support additional learning needs
- Very effective use of a good range of learning resources
- Good employer support

Areas for improvement

- Slow progress by some learners
- Insufficient planning for assessment
- Underdeveloped use of targets for learners

Achievement and standards

32. Achievements and standards are satisfactory. Learners develop good personal and vocational skills that increase their self-esteem and employability. They gain confidence and develop skills in communication, personal organisation and team leading. Team leaders are more reflective about their workplace practices. They are better able to deal with people and problems and plan more effectively for their team. For example, an administration learner has improved her computing skills and is now better able to produce and use a range of business documentation. Learners who receive literacy and numeracy support demonstrate good development of their skills. For example, three learners in one organisation apply their learning in tasks such as calculating weights and percentages for chemicals more easily without using a calculator. This strength was identified in the self-assessment report.

33. Overall success rates were satisfactory at 60% in 2006-07. However, progress by some learners is slow. For example, three learners who have been on the programme for 10 months have only completed one NVQ unit and their portfolios contain little evidence. This area for improvement was identified in the self-assessment report. The standard of learners work is satisfactory and appropriate to the level of programme.

Quality of provision

34. The quality of the provision is satisfactory. Assessors make very effective use of a good range of learning resources to support training. This strength was identified in the self-

assessment report. Matrix has developed and makes use of a large bank of good electronic presentations, lesson plans and handouts. These support group and individual coaching well and independent study on a wide variety of business topics including equality and diversity. Matrix shares good practice effectively with learners and employers by making good use of training materials from the main employer it works with. This is done with their full encouragement. Tutors and assessors establish a good rapport with learners and employers and have a flexible approach to meet workplace demands.

35. Arrangements to support additional learning needs are good. Most learners have an appropriate initial assessment of literacy and numeracy that is used effectively to identify support needs. Skills for life assessors provide good support for other assessors. Assessors provide good, sensitive individual learning that is made meaningful to learners by very effective links to everyday examples and job roles. Learners appreciate their training and are well motivated to continue improving their skills.
36. Planning for assessment is insufficient. Workplace activities and planning for assessment opportunities are not sufficiently coherent. Plans lack sufficient detail to enable learners to prepare fully for assessment. Learners do not always have sufficient understanding of NVQ standards to produce evidence themselves without prompting by assessors. Workplace supervisors are not adequately involved. They have insufficient knowledge of the programmes to facilitate opportunities for evidence collection and assessment. Assessors do not always clearly differentiate between assessment and training. Other aspects of assessment are satisfactory and meet awarding body standards.
37. Progress reviews are satisfactory, however, the use of targets for learners is under-developed. Assessors complete individual learning plans and identify units to be completed but there are no long-term targets. This makes it difficult for learners and assessors to evaluate progress. Short-term targets are generally clear although not always sufficiently challenging. Assessors monitor targets adequately. However, the focus is on tasks for the NVQ and targets related to the workplace and the building of personal and practical skills assessors do not adequately consider. Assessors make an estimated judgement about the percentage of each learners NVQ that have been completed but there are no accurate criteria on which to base this and judgements are very subjective.
38. Matrix supports and develops employers well. An effective organisational needs analysis is undertaken with all employers. Staff at Matrix have a good knowledge of employers' businesses and practices which they use well to provide effective assistance to improve business policies, processes and practices such as the development of job descriptions and appraisal systems. Supportive and professional training, outside the requirements of funded learning programmes, enables employers to address the training needs of the company and individual staff. This strength was not identified in the self-assessment report. Arrangements for support are satisfactory. Learners receive an appropriate induction that helps them settle into their programmes. Information, advice and guidance are satisfactory.

Leadership and management

39. Leadership and management are satisfactory. Staff have an appropriate awareness of the strategic direction of the company and the subject area. They are well qualified and experienced and update their industry practice well. Internal communications, staff

training and development and sharing of good practice are effective in supporting improvements. Matrix make appropriate use of data and targets at management level to monitor and improve performance. The self-assessment process is thorough, inclusive and the report is largely accurate in identifying strengths and weaknesses. The quality of observation reports of training and assessment are satisfactory giving clear judgements that generally match the grade awarded. Internal verification is satisfactory. Matrix make good use of equal opportunities data to monitor recruitment and achievement by gender and ethnicity. The promotion of equality and diversity however, is insufficient. Staff have received some recent training to raise their awareness of equality and diversity issues but not in how to promote equality and diversity to learners and employers.

Annex

Learners' achievements

Success rates on **work-based learning apprenticeship programmes** managed by Matrix Training **2004 to 2006**

Programme	End Year	Success rate	No. of learners*	Provider NVQ rate**	National NVQ rate**	Provider framework rate**	National framework rate**
Apprenticeships	03/04	overall	76	74%	47%	49%	32%
		timely	76	32%	24%	9%	16%
	04/05	overall	29	69%	50%	69%	38%
		timely	30	50%	29%	50%	22%
	05/06	overall	35	83%	58%	69%	53%
		timely	36	69%	38%	50%	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

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

Success rates on **work-based learning Train to Gain programmes** managed by Matrix Training **2006 to 2007**

Programme	End Year	Success rate	No. of learners*	Provider NVQ rate**
Train to Gain ***	2005/06	Overall	138	86%
		Timely	97	56%
	2006/07	Overall	51	77%
		Timely	21	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

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

*** Includes Train to Gain long course NVQ provision, but not skills for life