

Rochdale Training Association Limited

Reinspection report

Reinspection date

25 March 2009

Reinspection number

330776

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Background information

Reinspection 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 reinspection 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 reinspection

In deciding the scope of the reinspection, inspectors consider the previous inspection report (www.ofsted.gov.uk), reports from the inspectorate's reinspection monitoring visits, and data on learners and their achievements over the period since the previous inspection. Inspectors also 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.

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 reinspection focused on:

- Engineering and manufacturing technologies

Description of the provider

1. Rochdale Training Association (RTA) is a training provider with charitable status. Formed in 1984, it is located in central Rochdale and works with approximately 120 local companies including 20 member companies. The chief executive reports directly to the board of five trustees elected from member companies. RTA employs 28 staff of whom 21 are employed full-time and seven on a part-time basis. RTA also uses five associate consultants regularly.
2. LSC funding represents approximately 90% of RTA's business. RTA contracts with Greater Manchester LSC to provide work-based learning programmes including apprenticeship, advanced apprenticeship and Train to Gain. Some 197 learners are enrolled on Train to Gain programmes including construction, engineering, healthcare, information and communication technology (ICT), business administration and management. Currently 133 learners are on apprenticeship programmes mainly in engineering, business administration and customer services. Health and social care and construction are delivered through local subcontractors and were not included in this inspection.
3. This reinspection follows the inspection in November 2007, at which RTA's overall effectiveness, leadership and management and its arrangements for equality of opportunity were inadequate. Provision was inadequate in engineering and manufacturing technologies but good in ICT and business administration. This reinspection focused on the engineering provision and on the leadership and management of the organisation but other areas were sampled. RTA has 97 advanced apprentices, 36 apprentices and 197 Train to Gain learners. In engineering, RTA has 85 advanced apprentices, 15 apprentices and 47 Train to Gain learners.
4. Rochdale Metropolitan Borough is one of the districts within Greater Manchester. In 2001, the population was 205,357. Around 13.9% of the local population are from minority ethnic groups. In Rochdale in 2006, the percentage of pupils gaining five GCSEs at grades A* to C was 50.3%, compared with a national average of 59.2%. In 2007, the unemployment rate was 7.0% compared with 5.2% nationally.

Summary of grades awarded at previous inspection

Effectiveness of provision	Inadequate: Grade 4
Capacity to improve	Satisfactory: Grade 3
Achievement and standards	Satisfactory: Grade 3
Quality of provision	Satisfactory: Grade 3
Leadership and management	Inadequate: Grade 4
Equality of opportunity	Contributory grade: Inadequate: Grade 4

Sector subject areas

Engineering and manufacturing technologies	Inadequate: Grade 4
Information and communication technologies	Good: Grade 2
Business administration and law	Good: Grade 2

Summary of grades awarded at reinspection

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

Sector subject area

Engineering and manufacturing technologies	Satisfactory: Grade 3
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Overall judgement

Effectiveness of provision

Satisfactory: Grade 3

5. The overall effectiveness of the provision is satisfactory. The provision in engineering and manufacturing technologies is satisfactory. Achievement and standards across the organisation are good. Achievement and standards in engineering and manufacturing technologies are satisfactory and improving. All learners demonstrate at least satisfactory development of workplace skills. Most success rates improved in 2007/08. Success rates on advanced apprenticeships across the organisation are good and have improved significantly since 2006/07.
6. The quality of provision across the organisation is good. The quality of provision in engineering and manufacturing technologies is satisfactory and improving. Engineering apprentices complete suitable practical exercises and assessment projects in a range of disciplines. Teaching and learning resources are of satisfactory quality and sufficient in quantity. Assessment practice is thorough and uses a wide range of assessment methods effectively. Programmes are designed to meet employers' and learners' needs well. Support for learners is good and clearly impacts on learners' progress.
7. Leadership and management are good. A significant number of changes and improvements have taken place since the previous inspection. Management of data has improved and provides good quality information to allow staff and managers to monitor progress and the affect of improvement strategies effectively. The good standard of provision in business administration and law and in ICT identified at the previous inspection has been maintained. The promotion of equality of opportunity at RTA has improved since the previous inspection and is now good.

Capacity to improve

Good: Grade 2

8. RTA has a good capacity to improve. Most of the areas for improvement identified at the previous inspection have been resolved successfully.
9. Success rates and learner and employer satisfaction with the quality of the training programmes have improved. The inspection grade profile has improved in all areas since the previous inspection. Key areas for improvement have already been identified by RTA in its self-assessment report and actions are underway to secure improvement.
10. The self-assessment process is detailed and thorough and involves sufficient consultation with staff. Learners' and employers' views are gained through questionnaires and reviews and contribute to the self-assessment report. The

report identifies many of the issues found at inspection, and the subsequent quality improvement plan highlights issues of concern within appropriate timescales. The management team and staff have a clear focus and direction in taking the company forward.

Key strengths

- High overall success rates on apprenticeships in 2007/08
- Flexible training to meet employers' and learners' needs
- Particularly good strategic management
- Particularly effective action planning to improve provision
- Very effective steps to engage underrepresented groups

Key areas for improvement

- Low timely success rates in engineering for advanced apprentices and Train to Gain learners
- Insufficient monitoring of the quality of subcontracted provision

Main findings

Achievement and standards

Good: Grade 2

11. Achievement and standards across the organisation are good. Achievement and standards in engineering are satisfactory. Success rates on advanced apprenticeships across the organisation are good and have improved significantly since 2006/07. At 84%, they are now 21% above national rates. Advanced apprenticeship rates in engineering and manufacturing technologies in 2007/08 are now satisfactory at 60%, showing a slight improvement since 2006/07 and are now comparable with national rates. Success rates for apprentices across the organisation are very good at 93%, 29% above national rates. In 2007/08, success rates for apprenticeships in engineering and manufacturing technologies are also very good, showing a significant improvement since 2006/07. Success rates on Train to Gain programmes across the organisation are consistently good.
12. In 2007/08, success rates on engineering apprenticeship programmes were very high while timely success rates were satisfactory. This strength was identified in the self-assessment report. Timely and overall success rates have both improved markedly over the last three years. In 2007/08, overall success rates for engineering advanced apprentices and Train to Gain learners were satisfactory. However, timely success rates for engineering advanced apprentices and Train to Gain learners, although improving, have been low over the last few years as identified in the self-assessment report. Most of the engineering advanced apprentices currently in their final year are making appropriate progress. Most apprentices complete their key skills successfully during their first year of training.
13. Workplace skills development is satisfactory. Apprentices gain good skills during off-the-job training. In the fabrication training centre area, practical assignments develop apprentices' skills above the requirements for the performing engineering operations level 2 qualification. Apprentices are highly aware of the requirement for safe practices in the training centre. Advanced apprentices nearing the end of their apprenticeship work with a minimum of supervision and many produce high precision components. The standard of advanced apprentice portfolios is satisfactory. Train to Gain learners on the business improvement techniques course improve the effectiveness of their workplace environment and further develop their problem solving skills. Train to Gain learners on the performing manufacturing operations course improve their teamwork and confidence and develop a greater awareness of health and safety issues in their companies.

Quality of provision

Good: Grade 2

14. The quality of provision across the organisation is good. The quality of provision in engineering is good and improving. Teaching and learning are good. Off-the-

job training for engineering apprentices is satisfactory. Apprentices complete suitable practical exercises and assessment projects in a range of disciplines such as fitting, machining, welding and electrical wiring. Training centre resources are appropriate to support this training. Some recent changes have improved the learning environment. Employers and parents receive regular reports on apprentice progress. Training centre instructors are suitably qualified. Some evidence for key skills is derived from the assessed practical projects. Completion of the employment rights and responsibilities unit is also used for key skills evidence. Little use is made of evidence derived from the technical certificate. Plans and training materials are developed well to suitably increase the key skills evidence from practical work. Advanced apprentices suitably develop their skills during on-the-job training in employers' companies. Most benefit by working closely with highly skilled supervisors. A few Train to Gain learners attend an appropriate course in the training centre to further develop their welding skills. The initial assessment of apprentices is satisfactory. Those requiring extra literacy and/or numeracy support attend in one group. Appropriate initial assessment procedures for Train to Gain learners include literacy and numeracy assessments and a review of existing workplace skills.

15. Progress assessment and monitoring are satisfactory. RTA assessors visit advanced apprentices frequently in their companies and review their progress in conjunction with their employers. Suitable targets are set to be achieved by the time of the next visit. Assessment of practical skills for the National Vocational Qualifications (NVQs) is an appropriate mix of witness statements, signed by workplace supervisors, and observation by RTA assessors. Advanced apprentice progress is monitored closely, using a good overview sheet which gives a clear visual indication of their progress. The main focus on Train to Gain programmes is mostly to accredit learners' existing skills. Comprehensive documentation records contact with learners and their progress. RTA assessors visit learners at times to suit their workplace activities, including night shifts. Targets set for Train to Gain learners are not always sufficiently detailed.
16. Programmes and activities meet employers' and learners' needs and interests well. Apprentices follow different attendance patterns at the training centre to meet employers' requirements. RTA operates a separate off-the-job training centre for one local employer. Apprentices complete key skills at a level that allows them to progress to their advanced apprenticeship. RTA works with employers to identify suitable potential apprentices and has provided a pool of trained potential apprentices for employers. NVQ units, in addition to those required for the qualification, help apprentices, advanced apprentices and Train to Gain learners to develop a wider skills profile. Apprentices achieve additional first aid and abrasive wheels qualifications. Many Train to Gain learners have been unable to start their programmes on time because of RTA administrative problems. Other learners have experienced substantial delays because of employer production demands.
17. Support for apprentices, advanced apprentices and Train to Gain learners is satisfactory. Apprentices have been helped successfully to find other placements

or employment after being made redundant. Many apprentices make use of RTA's laptop loan scheme to support their written work. RTA provides apprentices with a good range of presentations on managing money, drugs awareness and sexual health. Those advanced apprentices who do not complete their apprenticeships in the contracted time continue to be supported by RTA and their companies. RTA has organised support from a translator for non-English speaking Train to Gain learners.

Leadership and management

Satisfactory: Grade 3

Equality of opportunity

Contributory grade: Good: Grade 2

18. Leadership and management are satisfactory, as identified in the self-assessment report. Strategic management is good. Managers at RTA have taken effective action to secure financial stability and continued growth. Learner numbers have increased, financial controls are satisfactory and financial performance is now good. The board of governors is supportive and proactive in developing RTA, as identified in the self-assessment report. Good appointments have been made to the board to assist RTA managers and staff to develop the organisation. RTA has developed good succession plans to ensure continuity in management and develop managers and staff.
19. Action planning to improve provision has been particularly effective. Identified areas for improvement at the previous inspection have all been improved and strengths maintained. The good provision in business, administration and law and in ICT has been maintained. Progress in planning improvements has been substantial. The quality improvement plan notes all of the areas identified at the previous inspection and additional issues identified by RTA. Progress against the plan is monitored closely by managers. Staff roles have been restructured and additional posts created to reduce staff workloads. Health and safety is now promoted and managed well. Effective use has been made of external consultants to improve provision. New and appropriate policies and procedures are now in place for accident reporting, risk assessment, monitoring and embedding learner and staff understanding and compliance with health and safety. A comprehensive risk assessment has taken place and actions arising are being rectified promptly and effectively. Audits are used effectively to check and maintain standards. RTA audits employers' premises when learners start on their programmes appropriately; however, not all existing employer placements have received a full check by the health and safety manager but they have received a preliminary check by trained delivery staff. These staff check learners have adequate supervision, safe working conditions and practices and that employers have liability insurance.
20. Operational management of the provision is satisfactory. Managers set appropriate aims and objectives and staff interact well to form a cohesive and mutually supportive team. Staff exchange information and discuss training

matters and individual learners to plan learning and take appropriate action. Job roles are clearly defined and understood and staff provide appropriate all-round support and guidance to learners. Continuous professional development of staff is appropriate. The staff appraisal process is satisfactory. Staff appraisal takes place annually. Six monthly reviews of appraisals have been introduced, as have individual monthly meetings to review targets set. These are linked effectively to the findings of observations of key learner processes such as teaching, learning and assessment.

21. Quality improvement, including processes for self-assessment, is satisfactory. An appropriate range of quality procedures and policies are now in place and are starting to improve provision. Significant work has been done to improve the observation of key learning processes. RTA makes good use of consultants. Effective quality improvement activities have taken place and a comprehensive continuous improvement log exists. Although service level agreements are appropriate, insufficient activity has taken place to assure the quality of subcontracted provision. Much of the subcontracted provision has yet to be observed. Feedback and action points arising from observations of key learning processes have been challenged by subcontractors. The documents used and the actions to be taken following an observation are still being developed. RTA identified this area for improvement in the self-assessment report and is making appropriate changes to establish the process.

22. Equality of opportunity is good, as identified in the self-assessment report. RTA has introduced particularly effective steps to engage with underrepresented groups. RTA works well with partner organisations to promote work-based learning in the wider community, as identified in the self-assessment report. RTA has engaged with schools in the local area successfully and held a well attended open evening for school leavers and their parents. Good and effective links exist with the local authority. Taster sessions have been used well to recruit underrepresented groups. Profiles of underrepresented groups have increased significantly and are now good when compared with local demographic data and national averages. For example, on business and customer service programmes at the time of the previous inspection only 7% of apprentices and advanced apprentices were from minority ethnic communities, against a 14% local profile. This figure has risen to 21%. On the same programmes 25% of learners are male, compared with a national average of 19%. On the engineering Train to Gain programme, 34% of the learners are from minority ethnic communities compared with the local profile of 14%. RTA makes good use of consultants who work effectively with the Deputy Chief Executive of RTA. A member of the local authority with recognised specialism in equality and diversity has been co-opted onto the board of directors. All policies and procedures have been completely reviewed and where necessary appropriately rewritten. A clear vision and commitment statement now exists. A detailed action plan has been written and is carefully followed and monitored. Management data relating to equality is used effectively. Promotional and teaching and learning materials are appropriate. Staff training is good and is effective in raising the level of awareness and understanding of equality and diversity. A range of appropriate topics have been

covered, including 'Update on the law', 'Daring to do as Diversity' and 'Race, Religion and Culture'. Other appropriate training is scheduled. All employers receive appropriate guidance on equality and diversity and are offered the use of RTA training materials. A Disability Discrimination Act assessment has taken place and an appropriate action plan has been created and is being followed.

23. Procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements. Appropriate Criminal Records Bureau checks have been carried out on all staff and subcontractor staff. Suitable safeguarding training has taken place and two members of staff have been appointed as safeguarding officers.

What learners like:

- Building confidence and developing a whole range of skills
- Meeting new people and working with people who want to learn
- 'RTA was helpful in finding a work-placement'
- The practical training in the first year
- 'It has given me chances to succeed'
- Gaining the knowledge and skills to improve matters that have been an irritation with the job
- Time away from the shop floor to discuss wider issues and to tackle projects
- The variety of work
- 'I am surprising myself; I have never done some of these things before'
- 'I'm enjoying the challenge'
- 'Learning how to apply subjects like mathematics that you learnt at school and never thought would be any use'
- Friendly, helpful instructors
- Becoming more aware of safety and quality matters
- 'I have gained a fully detailed view of all aspects of my job'
- Gaining a qualification
- 'RTA got me a job after I was made redundant'
- 'Learn and earn at the same time'
- 'I can do the NVQ and college work at the same time'

What learners think could improve:

- The relevance of some of the topics in the syllabus: 'Some were not relevant'
- Less repetition
- Less work from college and RTA: 'There was too much'
- Relating the practical training to the workplace more
- Less mechanical engineering on the electrical training course: 'There is too much during the first year'
- Later starts in the morning
- Less time in the training centre without a period of work experience in company
- A better range of tools in the workshop
- Nothing

Annex

Learners' achievements

Success rates on work-based learning apprenticeship programmes managed by the provider 2005 to 2008

Programme	End Year	Success rate	No. of learners*	Provider NVQ rate**	National NVQ rate**	Provider framework rate**	National framework rate**
Advanced Apprenticeships	05/06	overall	33	58%	53%	55%	47%
		timely	37	5%	34%	3%	30%
	06/07	overall	17	53%	67%	53%	64%
		timely	13	0%	45%	0%	42%
	07/08	overall	15	60%	63%	60%	59%
		timely	15	20%	46%	20%	43%
Apprenticeships	05/06	overall	5	40%	54%	40%	48%
		timely	5	0%	35%	0%	31%
	06/07	overall	33	85%	64%	61%	59%
		timely	32	69%	45%	47%	41%
	07/08	Overall	11	91%	60%	91%	57%
		timely	10	70%	46%	70%	43%

* 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

** Provider and 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 NVQ programmes managed by the provider 2006 to 2009

Programme	End Year	Success rate	No. of learners*	Provider NVQ rate**
Train to Gain NVQ	2007/08	overall	72	72%
		timely	22	31%
	2008/09 (5 months)	overall	75	85%
		timely	39	0%

Note: 2008/09 data is 'part year' only and is representative of the first three months or greater of the LSC contract year

* 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

** NVQ qualification success rates are calculated using data supplied to Ofsted by the provider before inspection