

INSPECTION REPORT

Allenvale Tools & Production Ltd

19 November 2002



ADULT LEARNING
INSPECTORATE

Grading

Inspectors use a seven-point scale to summarise their judgements about the quality of learning sessions. The descriptors for the seven grades are:

- *grade 1 - excellent*
- *grade 2 - very good*
- *grade 3 - good*
- *grade 4 - satisfactory*
- *grade 5 - unsatisfactory*
- *grade 6 - poor*
- *grade 7 - very poor.*

Inspectors use a five-point scale to summarise their judgements about the quality of provision in occupational/curriculum areas and Jobcentre Plus programmes. The same scale is used to describe the quality of leadership and management, which includes quality assurance and equality of opportunity. The descriptors for the five grades are:

- *grade 1 - outstanding*
- *grade 2 - good*
- *grade 3 - satisfactory*
- *grade 4 - unsatisfactory*
- *grade 5 - very weak.*

The two grading scales relate to each other as follows:

SEVEN-POINT SCALE	FIVE-POINT SCALE
grade 1	grade 1
grade 2	
grade 3	grade 2
grade 4	grade 3
grade 5	grade 4
grade 6	grade 5
grade 7	

Adult Learning Inspectorate

The Adult Learning Inspectorate (ALI) was established under the provisions of the *Learning and Skills Act 2000* to bring the inspection of all aspects of adult learning and work-based training within the remit of a single inspectorate. The ALI is responsible for inspecting a wide range of government-funded learning, including:

- work-based training for all people over 16
- provision in further education colleges for people aged 19 and over
- **learndirect** provision
- Adult and Community Learning
- training funded by Jobcentre Plus
- education and training in prisons, at the invitation of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Prisons.

Inspections are carried out in accordance with the *Common Inspection Framework* by teams of full-time inspectors and part-time associate inspectors who have knowledge of, and experience in, the work which they inspect. All providers are invited to nominate a senior member of their staff to participate in the inspection as a team member.

Overall judgement

In those cases where the overall judgement is that the provision is adequate, only those aspects of the provision which are less than satisfactory will be reinspected.

Provision will normally be deemed to be inadequate where:

- more than one third of published grades for occupational/curriculum areas, or
- leadership and management are judged to be less than satisfactory

This provision will be subject to a full reinspection.

The final decision as to whether the provision is inadequate rests with the Chief Inspector of Adult Learning. A statement as to whether the provision is adequate or not is included in the summary section of the inspection report.

SUMMARY

The provider

Allenvale Tools and Production Ltd is a subsidiary company of P and B Metals and is based in Whitstable, Kent. The Allenvale Training Centre serves both companies. It provides training for young people in engineering, technology and manufacturing. There are seven learners within the scope of the inspection, of whom four are advanced modern apprentices and two are foundation modern apprentices. One learner is following a national vocational qualifications (NVQ) training programme.

Overall judgement

The quality of the provision is adequate to meet the reasonable needs of those receiving it. Training in engineering technology and manufacturing is satisfactory as is the leadership and management of the Allenvale Training Centre, including the arrangements for quality assurance. Equality of opportunity is not satisfactory.

GRADES

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

Engineering, technology & manufacturing	3
Contributory grades:	
Work-based learning for young people	3

KEY STRENGTHS

- good management of training
- good learning environment for first two years of apprenticeship

KEY WEAKNESSES

- inadequate promotion and monitoring of equality of opportunity
- slow progress towards framework completion

THE INSPECTION

1. A team of three inspectors spent a total of nine days at the Allenvale Training Centre and the main production site during November 2002. They conducted 10 interviews with managers and staff. All the learners were interviewed. Inspectors examined three portfolios of evidence and six individual learning plans as well as learners' practical work. They observed assessments and graded two learning sessions. Inspectors studied the training centre's self-assessment report and an action plan, which were produced in August 2001.

Grades awarded to learning sessions

	Grade 1	Grade 2	Grade 3	Grade 4	Grade 5	Grade 6	Grade 7	Total
Engineering, technology & manufacturing	0	0	1	1	0	0	0	2
Total	0	0	1	1	0	0	0	2

THE PROVIDER AS A WHOLE

Context

2. Allenvale Tools and Production Ltd (Allenvale) occupies two sites in Whitstable. The main production site, the Riverside Works, manufactures press tools required in engineering manufacture. The second site, at Tyler Way, manufactures small press tool components and special purpose machines. There is also a P and B owned unit for high volume pressed electronic components at this location. The training centre is located at the second site. The training centre provides government-funded training in engineering production and manufacture with a specific focus on specialised tool making. All learners are employees of the company. The company employs 60 staff. The company contracts directly with the Kent and Medway Learning and Skills Council (LSC) for the provision of work-based learning programmes for young people. Allenvale became an approved assessment centre of the Engineering and Marine Training Authority (EMTA) in May 2001. Learners complete the first two years of their training programme at the training centre and then progress to working at the main site. Key skills and theory sessions are held at the training centre. Some learners attend local colleges on a day-release basis to work towards the theory qualifications which form part of the modern apprenticeship framework. In 2001, Allenvale won an award for its tools production.

3. The largest sectors of employment in the Kent and Medway LSC area are in the service and manufacturing industries. In May 2002, the unemployment rate for Kent was 2.4 per cent compared with the national average of 3 per cent. In 2000, 77 per cent of school leavers continued in full-time education. A further 5 per cent were involved in government-funded training and 2 per cent went into other part-time education. In 2001, the proportion of school leavers in Kent achieving five or more general certificates of secondary education (GCSEs) at grade C or above was 52 per cent, compared with the national average of 47.9 per cent. The proportion of the local population from minority ethnic groups in Kent is 2.3 per cent.

Work-based learning for young people

4. Learners spend the first two years of their training programme at the training centre, which provides a good learning environment. Learners gain good machine skills and are involved well in production work. Learner support is good and training is planned well to meet the needs of individual learners. Teaching is good at the training centre. Teaching of theory is of a high standard and good use is made of discussion and relevant videos, with good links between on- and off-the-job training. Internal verification processes are incomplete. There is no observation of assessments and internal verification takes place only at the end of the training programme. Learners make slow progress towards the completion of their modern apprenticeship framework and do not fully understand its requirements.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

Grade 3

5. The senior managers at Allenvale meet on a monthly basis. Meetings are chaired by the company chairman. The technical director is responsible for the training centre. The training centre operates as a discrete unit of the main company and an audit of the training centre's work is produced on a six monthly basis. It is managed by a full-time training officer who is responsible for all aspects of training in the company, including specialist in-house and externally sourced training, as well as the modern apprenticeships. He is assisted by two staff. A manager responsible for an operational unit is the lead internal verifier. A second manager supervises NVQ learners at the other unit. The training and support for modern apprentices is primarily carried out by the training officer. The company employs a full-time health and safety officer. The training officer is responsible for health and safety at the training centre. First stage recruitment and initial assessment is subcontracted to a local company specialising in training and personnel advice to businesses in the Kent area. Weekly sessions in theory and the development of key skills are held at the training centre. Some learners attend training programmes at local colleges on a day-release basis. The training centre has a full range of policies covering its operation, including quality assurance. The company has a recently revised equal opportunities policy which applies to all employees, including modern apprentices. Equality of opportunity is included in the induction programme for all learners. The training centre's first self-assessment report was produced in August 2001, and was updated for the inspection.

STRENGTHS

- good management of training
- good external links to promote engineering training

WEAKNESSES

- inadequate promotion and monitoring of equality of opportunity
- inadequate self-assessment process

OTHER IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED

- further development of the monitoring of training

6. Management of training is good. Training centre staff have a good understanding of their roles and responsibilities. Informal communication between staff is good and the team works effectively to tackle immediate operational matters. Learners are given good individual support in the first two years of their modern apprenticeship, while based at the training centre. Attendance is closely monitored and absences are followed up. Learners receive thorough initial guidance on health and safety, and safe working practices are reinforced throughout the training programme. Learners have

good access to specialist machinery and as they progress, are able to specialise and work alongside skilled toolmakers in operating sophisticated equipment. For example, manufacturing processes which involve wire erosion techniques. Operating in a commercial environment, learners are given additional responsibilities and are expected to work within tight time constraints to exacting standards. A room dedicated to the teaching of theory and key skills has recently been refurbished at the training centre with support from the local LSC. Additional LSC funds have been secured to purchase a computer for use by learners in their key skills work. When the theory classes required for the modern apprenticeship framework were no longer being offered by local colleges, arrangements were made for a member of staff from a local college to attend the centre to provide tuition on a weekly basis. Staff have extensive experience in their occupational specialisms. They have appropriate vocational qualifications, and in recent years have completed assessor awards. None of the Allenvale staff has teaching qualifications. Support for staff development is satisfactory, but there is no formal system of staff appraisal.

7. Allenvale has a longstanding commitment to promote engineering and relevant employment to young people. It participates in school work-experience programmes, engineering awareness schemes for primary school pupils and engineering competitions. Allenvale works closely with local education business partnerships to promote these activities. It was the first engineering company in its area to win an award for work-experience excellence and some pupils have become modern apprentices subsequent to their work experience. This commitment to training has been maintained effectively. Some of the company's employees were initially taken on as learners and have remained and progressed within the company. The company has a clear strategic and business plan which sets specific objectives for the training centre. It outlines the potential for the expansion of the centre's work in providing training to other areas within the group of companies, and, as part of a longer term strategy, to other engineering companies in the locality. Promotional materials and the website give good information about the modern apprenticeship training. The company's magazine provides regular updates on training activities and learners' achievements are celebrated. There is a paper-based management information system.

8. Although it has been over 18 months since the training centre gained its new status as a training provider, there have been no changes to the company's review processes for monitoring training. The minuted monthly meetings of the senior management team focus on operational production and financial matters. Training is not a standard item, but is considered as needs arise. There are regular discussions between the training officer and the technical director, but these take place on an informal basis and do not regularly involve other managers. For example, NVQ training has recently been developed at the neighbouring manufacturing unit operated by the parent company P and B. As yet, the training runs alongside and has not taken advantage of the more established working practices of the training centre. The training officer's six monthly audits identify the progress of individual learners, but they do not provide a detailed review of the training provision as a whole. Training audits have not been formally reviewed by the senior management team in the last year. Formal minuted meetings of

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the staff involved in training have only recently been introduced.

Equality of opportunity**Contributory grade 4**

9. Although very recently introduced, there is now a detailed policy, with associated guidance, for equality of opportunity. Written by the training officer, it describes the company's commitment to equality of opportunity and summarises aspects of key legislation which has been recently introduced. It outlines the procedures and applies these to the various stages of the learners' experiences to help ensure equality of opportunity. It includes separate policies for anti-harassment and bullying. Access to premises is satisfactory for those with mobility difficulties.

10. There is inadequate ongoing promotion of equality of opportunity to learners. It is thoroughly covered at induction, but there is not enough subsequent activity reinforcing or further developing learners' understanding. There are no specific formal training sessions on equality of opportunity and relevant issues are not discussed during training. Although a new progress review form has been produced, it does not prompt discussion of equality of opportunity and learners do not recall any discussion. There is also inadequate promotion of equal opportunities to staff. Some staff do not have sufficient knowledge and understanding of equality and diversity issues. There is no training to increase their awareness. Only the training officer has undertaken his own studies into equality of opportunity while preparing the new policy.

11. Staff at Allenvale have been involved in a number of initiatives to raise awareness of career opportunities in engineering. Allenvale is an enthusiastic supporter of the Robot Wars competition, sponsoring and helping local schools, including girls' schools, to develop a winning robot. However, the company's promotional advertisements contain only minimal statements relating to its commitment to equality of opportunity and nothing to encourage applications from learners from under-represented groups. The visual images used in the company's publicity reinforce rather than challenge existing stereotypes.

12. There are no systems in place to determine whether progress is being made in developing equality of opportunity. There is no management or training group at which equality of opportunity is regularly discussed and progress monitored. The policy is not yet accompanied by an implementation plan and no targets for improvement have been set. For example, there are no quantitative measures or targets used for monitoring the demographic composition of learners, or for widening participation among learners.

Quality assurance

Contributory grade 3

13. The arrangements for quality assurance are satisfactory. Good progress has been made in the 18 months of the training centre's operation as an independent training provider. There is a good range of policy documents covering all aspects of the training centre's work. For example, learners' recruitment and selection, the respective responsibilities of the employer and the learner, assessment and appeals procedures, complaints, disciplinary and grievance procedures, and guidance on the recording and follow up to early leavers. Policies are not dated, and there is no indication of when they were last reviewed.

14. Some improvements have been made as a result of quality review processes. Changes have been made to the progress review form to extend comment on unit performance and the recording of learners' own comments and agreed future actions. The form does not prompt discussion of equality of opportunity. Changes have been made to individual learning plans so that they become more of a working document, incorporating interim targets. A questionnaire for learners has recently been introduced, but the feedback gained from this process has not been acted on.

15. Some observation of assessment has taken place among the team as part of the work required to gain assessor awards. There are no formalised procedures for the observation of training or assessment. The sharing of good practice is informal and no records are kept. While the subcontracted provision for initial assessment and for theory training is effective, there are no formal arrangements for the review of subcontracted work.

16. The internal verification system focuses on the end of the assessment process. Some thorough assessment of learners' use of logbooks and portfolio evidence has been carried out. Learners are aware of the internal verification process and its outcomes. However, feedback to assessors rarely identifies points for improvement in assessment practice. Meetings of assessors have only recently been instigated. The lead internal verifier does not fully understand the awarding body forms. Responses to requests made in external verifiers' reports are satisfactory.

17. This is the first time the training centre has produced a self-assessment report. It provides a useful range of information. However, the preparation of the report did not involve a process of consultation with all staff. The report was not discussed at the senior management level and it does not feature the views of learners. Many of the strengths identified in the report are no more than normal practice. The report is not up to date and the focus for much of its evidence is the operating year 2000-01. The development plan addresses most of the weaknesses, but it does not indicate how strengths will be sustained. Action points have not been reviewed in the timescales set for their completion. The report does not form part of a more general process of quality improvement. Inspectors were in agreement with the report's grading judgements for leadership and management and quality assurance, but awarded lower grades for the area of learning and for equality of opportunity.

Good Practice

On successful completion of the modern apprenticeship framework, learners are given funds to purchase an item of specialist equipment of their own choosing. For example, one learner recently purchased a micrometer which he uses daily in his work.

AREAS OF LEARNING

Engineering, technology & manufacturing

Grade 3

Programmes inspected	Number of learners	Contributory grade
Work-based learning for young people	7	3

18. There are currently seven learners of whom four are advanced modern apprentices and two are foundation modern apprentices and one is on another work-based learning programme. All learners are working towards NVQs at levels 2 or 3 in engineering. Learners can specialise in production engineering, maintenance engineering or performing manufacturing operations. The maintenance engineering is a specialised subsection of production engineering. Training is provided at Allenvale, both in the classroom and in the workplace, and by two local colleges. The colleges are chosen by location and the suitability of training programmes offered. All learners are employed. For theory lessons, three learners remain at Allenvale, two attend local colleges and two require no theory training. All NVQ level 3 practical work is carried out at Allenvale as is the key skills training and assessment. Theory training is on day release at the local colleges or on morning release at Allenvale. Recruitment is carried out through advertising in the local press, by word of mouth, or as a result of the work experience provided for local schools. The initial assessment of applicants is carried out by a subcontractor. Induction takes place on the first day of employment. Assessments and learner's progress reviews are carried out, on average, every six to eight weeks. Foundation modern apprenticeships are expected to be achieved within the first 18 months and the advanced apprenticeship in the following 30 months.

The following tables show the achievement and retention rates available up to the time of the inspection.

Work-based learning for young people																	
Advanced modern apprenticeships (AMA)	2002-03		2001-02		2000-01												
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	
	Number of starts	2				2											
Retained*	2				2												
Successfully completed	0				0												
Still in learning	2				2												

*retained learners are those who have stayed in learning for at least the planned duration of their training programmes, or have successfully completed their programme within the time allowed

Work-based learning for young people															
Foundation modern apprenticeships (FMA)															
	2002-03		2001-02												
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	
Number of starts			3												
Retained*			2												
Successfully completed			0												
Still in learning			2												

*retained learners are those who have stayed in learning for at least the planned duration of their training programmes, or have successfully completed their programme within the time allowed

Work-based learning for young people															
NVQ Training															
	2001-02		2000-01												
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	
Number of starts	1		3												
Retained*	0		3												
Successfully completed	0		2												
Still in learning	0		1												

*retained learners are those who have stayed in learning for at least the planned duration of their training programmes, or have successfully completed their programme within the time allowed

STRENGTHS

- good learning environment for first two years of apprenticeship
- well planned training to meet individual learners' needs
- good teaching at the training centre

WEAKNESSES

- incomplete internal verification processes
- slow progress towards modern apprenticeship framework completion
- poor learners' knowledge of modern apprenticeship frameworks

OTHER IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED

- further development of progress reviews

19. Learners spend the first two years of their training programme at the training

centre. This is a good learning environment, a strength acknowledged in the self-assessment report. Some small press tool components and special purpose machines are produced on the training site. Training is concentrated on learning good machine skills and learners progress to good involvement in production work. There is good individual support for all learners.

20. Training is planned well to meet the needs of individual learners. An effective initial assessment is carried out by a subcontractor. Potential learners complete comprehensive and well-administered testing in basic skills, an assessment of mechanical comprehension, and key skills screening. Successful applicants are then interviewed by the training officer and good records are kept. Staff are flexible in their response to the prior knowledge and skills that learners possess on entry to training. For example, three learners have spent a year at college between leaving school and joining Allenvale. Staff have individually tailored their training programmes to allow them to continue with their prior studies. One learner gained an NVQ at level 2 except for one unit, and a first certificate at a subcontractor. The learner's programme has been modified so that he is in a position to generate the additional evidence required to complete the NVQ. Another learner is able to use the NVQ units gained on the first year of a national diploma programme to transfer to the second year of a national certificate programme.

21. The teaching at the training centre is good. Practical tuition is provided on an individual basis by the training officer and slowly builds up at a rate appropriate to the learner's ability. The teaching of theory is of a high standard. Good use is made of discussion and relevant videos. There is a good link between on- and off-the-job training as the tutor uses the site workshop operations to actively support and illustrate points made in the theory lessons. The teaching of key skills is clearly linked to practical work and homework is set regularly. Learners spend the final two years of their modern apprenticeships working at the main site with skilled members of staff. This training is satisfactory.

22. All learners have a minimum of three GCSEs at grade A-C. No additional support needs are identified on individual learning plans. There is no member of staff qualified to provide such support within the training provider. The learner progress review form has recently been updated and reviews are satisfactory. However, the reviews do not reinforce equality of opportunity or modern apprenticeship framework issues. There are no pastoral comments and targets are not clearly related to NVQ units.

23. The staff at the training centre are exceptionally well experienced and possess the required assessment qualifications to assess and internally verify. All assessment is carried out on live customer-based work. The quality of assessment is satisfactory. Achievement of the modern apprenticeship frameworks is satisfactory. Retention rates are good, but the numbers are small and most learners are relatively new to a modern apprenticeship.

24. The processes for internal verification are incomplete. There is no observation of assessments. There is not enough quality assurance in setting and maintaining

assessment standards. Internal verification takes place only at the end of the training programme and is not a continuous process throughout the year. Completed portfolios of evidence do not contain any signatures to indicate that verification has taken place. The candidate sampling process is satisfactory.

25. Learners make slow progress towards the completion of their full modern apprenticeship framework. Two of the learners are past their funded training periods. Some other learners have just started theory and key skills training after spending a year without any training in either. On-the-job training is not planned, a weakness acknowledged in the self-assessment report. Learners at the main site are asked to contact the training officer when suitable assessment opportunities arise, but fail to do so.

26. Learners are unaware of the requirements of the two modern apprenticeship frameworks. They do not know what they have to do to achieve the framework and cannot name their theory programme. They are unfamiliar with the wider key skills and the level of achievement in key skills required by the modern apprenticeship framework.

Good Practice

Modern apprentices have worked at local schools as mentors for projects to promote interest in engineering. A project to design a robotic model to demonstrate lifting was carried out by a group of primary school children. In another case, high school pupils were asked to design and manufacture an executive toy based on the company's logo. The modern apprentices take pride in these activities and the opportunities they bring to demonstrate their expertise in a more public context. They go on to prepare written reports and compile other evidence of their involvement in this work for inclusion in their key skills communication portfolios.