

INSPECTION REPORT

Oldham Engineering Group Training Association

21 July 2006



ADULT LEARNING
INSPECTORATE

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 learning within the remit of a single inspectorate. The ALI is responsible for inspecting a wide range of government-funded learning, including:

- work-based learning for all people aged over 16
- provision in further education colleges for people aged 19 and over
- **learnirect** 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
- adult information, advice and guidance services (**nextstep**).

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.

Pre-inspection analysis

The resources allocated to a cycle 2 inspection are primarily determined by the findings from the previous inspection. Account is also taken of information about achievement and retention obtained from the funding body, and any significant changes in the size or scope of the provision.

Where a provider has received good grades in cycle 1, the cycle 2 inspection is relatively light. If the provider offers a number of areas of learning, a restricted sample is inspected.

Where a provider has received satisfactory grades in cycle 1, the cycle 2 inspection is less intensive and it is possible that not all areas of learning are included.

Where there are significant unsatisfactory grades from cycle 1, the intensity of the cycle 2 inspection is broadly the same as cycle 1, and all significant areas of learning are inspected.

Providers that have not previously been inspected will receive a full inspection.

Overall effectiveness

The grades given for areas of learning and leadership and management will be used to arrive at a judgement about the overall effectiveness of the provider.

An **outstanding** provider should typically have leadership and management and at least half of the areas of learning judged to be a grade 1. All area of learning grades will be graded 1 or 2.

A **good** provider should have leadership and management and at least half of the area of learning grades judged to be a grade 2 or better. A good training provider should not have any grade 4s, and few grade 3s in the areas of learning.

A **satisfactory** provider should have adequate or better grades in leadership and management and in at least two thirds of the area of learning grades. An adequate provider might have a range of grades across areas of learning, some of which might be graded 4.

Provision will normally be deemed to be **inadequate** where more than one third of the area of learning grades and/or leadership and management are judged to be inadequate.

The final decision as to whether the provision is inadequate rests with the Chief Inspector of Adult Learning.

Grading

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

- *grade 1 - outstanding*
- *grade 2 - good*
- *grade 3 - satisfactory*
- *grade 4 - inadequate*

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INSPECTION REPORT

DESCRIPTION OF THE PROVIDER

1. Oldham Engineering Group Training Association is a limited company by guarantee and is a registered charity that operates under the name of OTC. It is a member-owned organisation with over 100 members paying annual subscriptions. Formed in 1966 by the Engineering Industry Training Board it became a limited company in 1970. A wholly owned subsidiary, OTC Consultancy Limited, was set up in 1997 to provide health, safety and environmental support to member companies on a commercial basis. The head office and training centre is located in Oldham. OTC contracts with Greater Manchester Learning and Skills Council (LSC) to provide apprenticeships for young people and Train to Gain provision. A chief executive leads a small senior management team to manage the company and reports to a board of non-executive directors. There are 37 staff in total, of whom 29 are full time and eight are part time.
2. OTC provides work-based learning programmes in engineering and manufacturing technologies, business administration and law, distribution and warehousing, and customer service. Although distribution and warehousing, and customer service were not inspected, these learners were observed.

OVERALL EFFECTIVENESS

Grade 2

3. **The overall effectiveness of the provision is good.** Leadership and management are good as are the arrangements for quality improvement. The arrangements for equality of opportunity are satisfactory. In business administration and law, the provision is good and in engineering and manufacturing technologies the provision is satisfactory.
4. **The inspection team had some confidence in the reliability of the self-assessment process.** OTC responds well to feedback and acts effectively on it, but it is not consistently critical in some aspects of the provision. Inspectors found that the report was largely accurate in its assessment of leadership and management. Most of the strengths and weaknesses matched those identified by inspectors. The report was less accurate in its assessment of engineering and manufacturing technologies, where inspectors identified additional strengths and weaknesses. In business administration and law, some strengths were judged to be no more than normal practice.
5. **The provider has demonstrated that it is in a good position to make improvements.** OTC has been particularly effective in carrying out actions to promote improvement, and the quality of the provision has improved. There have been significant and consistent improvements in success rates across the provision over the past three years. The quality of customer service provision, judged inadequate at the previous inspection, was recently reinspected and judged to be outstanding.

KEY CHALLENGES FOR OLDHAM ENGINEERING GROUP TRAINING ASSOCIATION:

- continue to improve success rates
- improve teaching and learning in engineering and manufacturing technologies, particularly in the use of information learning technology (ILT)
- provide staff development in equality and diversity
- share good practice and improve the use of data in all areas of the organisation
- improve internal verification, particularly in engineering and manufacturing technologies

GRADES

grade 1 = outstanding, grade 2 = good, grade 3 = satisfactory, grade 4 = inadequate

Grades awarded at inspection

Leadership and management		2
Contributory grades:		
Equality of opportunity		3
Quality improvement		2

Engineering and manufacturing technologies			3
Contributory areas:	Number of learners	Contributory grade	
Engineering Apprenticeships for young people	100	3	
Manufacturing technologies Train to Gain	57	3	

Business administration and law			2
Contributory areas:	Number of learners	Contributory grade	
Administration Apprenticeships for young people	66	2	

ABOUT THE INSPECTION

6. The inspection was carried out in a single visit to the provider. Provision in warehousing and distribution was inspected in 2005 and was not a part of this inspection.

Number of inspectors	5
Number of inspection days	20
Number of learners interviewed	54
Number of staff interviewed	28
Number of employers interviewed	13
Number of locations/sites/learning centres visited	15
Number of partners/external agencies interviewed	2
Number of visits	1

KEY FINDINGS

Achievements and standards

7. Success rates for all apprenticeship and advanced apprenticeship programmes have improved significantly since 2003 in all occupational areas.

8. Success rates on engineering programmes are satisfactory and improving. There has been a consistent and significant year-on-year improvement in most programmes in engineering. However, the success rate on the Train to Gain programme is declining from good to satisfactory. The standard of learners' work and skills development is satisfactory.

9. **There are good and improving success rates on apprenticeship programmes in business administration.** In contrast to this the success rate for advanced apprentices in 2003-04 was zero per cent. This rate improved significantly in 2004-05 and for learners due to complete their programmes in the current year.

The quality of provision

Grades given to learning sessions

	Grade 1	Grade 2	Grade 3	Grade 4	Total
Engineering and manufacturing technologies	0	6	2	1	9
Total	0	6	2	1	9

10. **In engineering and manufacturing technology, good systems are in place to record and monitor learner progress.** Progress spreadsheets are supplemented by a graphical display that compares clearly learners' progress against a predicted achievement within the expected time frame.

11. **Support for learners in engineering and in business administration is good.** Good

initial and diagnostic assessments are used effectively in both occupational areas to identify individual support needs. Learners receive good support from qualified tutors within the training centre. Staff visit learners frequently in the workplace and provide good individual support on a regular basis. Learners' progress is closely monitored and short-term targets are effectively set to enable employers to provide appropriate training and/or resources.

12. OTC has developed very effective relationships with employers from both occupational areas to facilitate learning and assessment. Employers work very well with OTC's staff in allowing access to learners in the workplace. In engineering, assessment activities are often planned to include specific workplace tasks required by the employer. National vocational qualification (NVQ) optional units have been carefully selected in consultation with employers to ensure they match the business need and the workplace activities.

13. Off-the-job training in business administration is good. Most learners attend the training centre for half a day each week. The training includes a good variety of tasks such as telephone techniques, presentation skills, negotiation and team-working skills.

14. Teaching and learning in engineering is satisfactory. Lessons are well planned and managed with an appropriate mix of background knowledge and practical activities. However, **there is insufficient use of ILT resources to promote learning.** Classrooms do not have permanently installed ILT resources. Although a number of portable laptop computers and electronic projection devices are available, these are not well used.

15. In business administration, the recording of progress reviews and targets is insufficiently clear. Insufficient medium- and long-term targets are set. Aspects of personal development and achievements from the off-the-job training programme are not referred to during progress reviews.

Leadership and management

16. Business and strategic planning is good. The vision and mission statements, together with appropriate strategic objectives, are agreed by all staff and managers and are based on local needs and national developments. The statements are linked well to operational planning and are accompanied by clear targets. The plans are managed well.

17. Good use is made of extensive links with employers, other providers and commercial organisations. Staff representatives serving on network groups often use information gained to help meet the needs of their learners or to develop the provision. Communications within the provider are very good.

18. Additional learning support is particularly well managed. All learners are initially assessed using appropriate initial and diagnostic tests. Training advisers are formally trained to nationally recognised standards in literacy and numeracy support. Records of learner support are detailed and up to date. OTC assesses the effectiveness of learner support using a variety of methods.

19. A good range of actions has been implemented to widen participation. OTC works closely with a number of organisations that support young people with individual and specific needs. OTC staff frequently visit local secondary schools to promote engineering

as a career. The company has been successful in increasing the number of women learners. The company has been less successful in attracting learners from minority ethnic groups.

20. **The training of learners and staff in equality of opportunity is insufficient.** Learners do not have an adequate understanding of equality of opportunity. Staff receive insufficient equal opportunities training.

21. **OTC has taken good and effective actions to manage quality improvement.** There has been a significant and consistent improvement in success rates over the past three years. Retailing and customer service provision, judged inadequate in 2003, was judged outstanding at reinspection in 2005. There is clear evidence of the progress made in quality improvement since the previous inspection.

22. **Feedback arrangements to aid improvement are good.** Feedback is analysed effectively, and useful summaries are analysed and acted upon by managers. Staff and learners are kept up to date on actions implemented following feedback. There is a clear link between the views collected, and improvements put in place.

Leadership and management

Strengths

- good business and strategic planning
- particularly effective use of external links
- particularly well-managed learning support
- very good improvements in success rates
- good, effective range of actions to manage quality improvement
- good range of actions to widen participation

Weaknesses

- insufficient equality of opportunity training

Engineering and manufacturing technologies

Strengths

- good recording and monitoring of learners' progress
- very effective learner support
- effective working relationships with employers
- particularly effective actions to improve the provision

Weaknesses

- weak aspects of internal verification
- insufficient use of ILT

Business administration and law

Strengths

- good and improving success rates on apprenticeship programmes
- good off-the-job training
- particularly effective employer support for the provision
- good learner support

Weaknesses

- insufficiently clear recording of progress targets and progress reviews

WHAT LEARNERS LIKE ABOUT OLDHAM ENGINEERING GROUP TRAINING ASSOCIATION:

- 'all the staff are great, even the chief executive speaks to you in the centre'
- 'it's good to be treated as adults'
- 'staff are always ready to give support'
- 'the training has developed my confidence - I now know more people in the company'
- the five-day course on lift truck driving
- the good match of NVQ units to work activities
- 'I'm allowed to work at my own pace'

WHAT LEARNERS THINK OLDHAM ENGINEERING GROUP TRAINING ASSOCIATION COULD IMPROVE:

- the classroom accommodation and resources
- the wording on the NVQ paperwork - too complicated
- 'not having theory sessions in noisy workshops'
- the amount of paperwork learners have to complete
- the number of visits to the workplace for NVQ assessment

DETAILED INSPECTION FINDINGS

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

Grade 2

Strengths

- good business and strategic planning
- particularly effective use of external links
- particularly well-managed learning support
- very good improvements in success rates
- good, effective range of actions to manage quality improvement
- good range of actions to widen participation

Weaknesses

- insufficient equality of opportunity training

23. Business and strategic planning are good. OTC has a clear strategic direction, set and shared by managers, staff and the board of directors. The vision and mission statements, together with appropriate strategic objectives, are determined jointly by staff and managers. These statements are linked well to operational planning and provide clear team targets. The organisation has based its sound development strategy on local needs and on national developments in work-based learning and in 14-16 provision. Operational plans are managed well. Managers review the plans formally and frequently and provide detailed reports on progress against operational targets to management, staff and directors. OTC uses a number of plans that are co-ordinated effectively to reduce repetition and maintain clarity. Strategic and operational plans support well the three-year development plan required by the LSC.

24. Particularly effective use is made of external links. The provider makes good use of extensive and productive links with employers, providers and commercial organisations. OTC is represented by staff at all levels on a wide range of committees, working groups and network groups. Staff representatives produce formal reports on their activities and often use these to help meet the needs of their learners or to develop the provision. For example, a member of staff serving on a sector skills council committee identified opportunities to develop training programmes in the use of new technology in the industry. Communications with external organisations are good. Industry links through the network of member companies are particularly good and enable OTC to monitor industrial developments. There is a particularly useful arrangement with a similar provider. Communications within the provider are very good. OTC shares good practice through formal and informal meetings between managers and staff.

25. Learning support is particularly well managed, in line with the clear company strategy and detailed procedures. All learners are initially assessed using appropriate initial and diagnostic tests. The results are shared with the learners and used as the basis for a detailed and useful learning support plan. Training advisers are formally trained to nationally recognised standards in literacy and numeracy support. They play a valuable role in supporting their learners and work closely with specialist staff to implement the

training plans. The whole process is audited against specific key performance indicators as part of the quality assurance system, and an internal steering group facilitates development and continuous improvement. Records of learner support are detailed and up to date. OTC assesses the effectiveness of support for learners through a variety of methods. However, this assessment does not currently extend to assessing the success rates of learners receiving support against those not receiving support.

26. Success rates for all programmes have improved significantly since 2003. The overall success rate for advanced apprenticeships in 2003-04 was in line with a poor national average. The rate improved by 13 per cent to 9 percentage points above the national average in 2004-05. The success rate for learners due to complete in 2005-06 currently stands at 57 per cent. The success rate for apprenticeships in 2003-04 was 16 percentage points above a low national average. A 23 per cent increase in 2004-05 took the success rate to 23 percentage points above the national average. The current rate for learners due to complete in 2005-06 is 54 per cent with 15 learners still in learning.

27. OTC meets the needs of its learners by a carefully managed portfolio of government-funded and commercial fee earning courses. The provision has been adapted over a number of years to accommodate changes in local and national needs. OTC has a good strategy for the development of, and withdrawal from, provision. For example, during a drop in enrolments on engineering courses the provider focused on the wider training needs of its member companies and introduced training in business administration. In addition to meeting industrial and commercial needs, the provider is aware of the individual needs of its learners, and works well to meet those needs. For example, a number of advanced apprentices, unable to complete their full programme, were awarded a foundation apprenticeship having fulfilled the requirements of the qualification during their stay with the provider.

28. Performance management is broadly satisfactory. Training advisers have demanding and carefully managed targets related to the retention and achievement of their own caseload of learners. Teams of staff agree targets for new initiatives and general developments and improvements. However, these targets are not formally recorded or assigned to individuals. Staff are formally appraised each year using a well-established and appropriate appraisal system. Staff development is broadly satisfactory. However, the staff development plan is not sufficiently linked to strategic objectives and is currently only a record of activities completed rather than a useful means of planning future activities.

29. The assessment and management of health and safety is good. Three staff, who provide health and safety training and assessment as part of the OTC's directly funded service to employers, provide the same service to the company and its publicly funded learners. Checks on premises are appropriate and well recorded. Learners receive a good introduction to health and safety at induction through a one-day accredited Institute of Health and Safety programme. An appropriate number of staff have first aid qualifications and, following an incident during the inspection week, responded quickly and effectively to deal with a casualty. Arrangements for child protection within the organisation are satisfactory and conform to relevant child protection legislation. OTC has an appropriate child protection policy and has nominated a child protection officer. Training has been arranged for the nominated person but has yet to be arranged for key staff. Following an audit, reasonable measures have been taken to improve access and further improvements are planned.

Equality of opportunity

Contributory grade 3

30. OTC has implemented a range of actions to widen participation. It works closely with a number of organisations, such as MPower, to support young people with individual and specific needs and engage them in learning. Staff from OTC frequently visit local secondary schools to promote engineering as a career. In 2004-05, 17 visits to schools included presentations at careers events, participation in parents evenings and interviews with pupils. In February 2006, OTC participated in taster days for young people. Groups from local schools visited the training centre and participated in the making of carriage clocks. In another case, apprentices from OTC have been involved in a project where they visited schools to present relevant information on, and practical demonstrations of, engineering applications. The project developed apprentices' own communication skills. OTC has recently worked with groups from a local infant school. Three groups of nine-year-old pupils attended the training centre and took part in practical activities promoting an interest in engineering. The company has been successful in increasing the number of women learners. In 2005-06, almost 6 per cent of its learners in engineering are women, compared with the national average of approximately 2.5 per cent. The company has been less successful in attracting learners from minority ethnic backgrounds with currently only 3 per cent in training, compared with some 15 per cent represented in the local resident population.

31. OTC has clear, recently updated policies for the promotion of equality of opportunity. These are suitably presented to staff and learners through handbooks, promotional material, and displays at the training centre. Appropriate aspects of equal opportunities are checked before learners are placed with employers. Equality of opportunity is adequately monitored during progress reviews through a range of set questions.

32. Arrangements for responding to concerns and complaints are satisfactory. Learners have an adequate understanding of what to do if they experience harassment or bullying, and how to complain. OTC effectively responds to complaints from learners and employers. Appropriate arrangements are in place and complaints are quickly and fairly investigated. A summary of all positive and negative feedback is regularly analysed by senior managers. Arrangements for learners to appeal against assessment decisions are in place. However, no guidance is provided on how to informally raise a concern about an assessment decision.

33. Sufficient use is made of data to widen participation and monitor equality of opportunity. A suitable range of information is collected. Some data has been lost, but sound recording and analysis arrangements are now in place. The company adequately monitors performance at management level. A particularly useful range of graphically presented information is currently being developed to aid recruitment. OTC fully understands its performance in widening participation. However, its ability to analyse the performance of individual learner groups is still being developed.

34. Access is adequate for people with restricted mobility. Doors have been adapted for easy access by wheelchair users. A signer is available for learners with impaired hearing. The upper floor of the centre has recently been refurbished to a good standard. Access to the upper floor is provided by a lift, but this is difficult to access and operate.

35. Training of learners and staff in equality of opportunity is insufficient. Learners receive a one hour session on equal opportunities, as part of their two-day induction. This covers

adequately the challenging of stereotypical attitudes, with good use of video and paper-based learning materials. However, no reference is made to other key aspects of discrimination, such as gender and ethnicity. Learners receive a copy of a good booklet on equality of opportunity produced by the LSC, but this is not fully used. Reinforcement of equality of opportunity beyond the induction programme comprises only questions during progress reviews, and through work as part of the technical certificates. Learners' understanding of equality of opportunity is not adequate. Staff receive insufficient training in equality of opportunity. In the past year, some 50 per cent of staff received disability awareness training. A half-day session on managing challenging behaviour was also provided for trainers by Oldham College. No other specific equal opportunities training has been provided in the past three years. Some staff have received no recorded equal opportunities training. Staff have a poor understanding of relevant issues or training carried out.

Quality improvement

Contributory grade 2

36. OTC has implemented a good range of actions to manage quality improvement. There has been a significant and consistent improvement in framework achievement over the past three years. Success rates in some areas of learning are now good. Learners' achievement of key skills has particularly improved. Retailing and customer service provision, judged inadequate in 2003, was judged outstanding at reinspection in 2005. There is clear evidence of the progress made in quality improvement since the previous inspection. Considerable effort has gone into developing a good range of policies and operational arrangements. Procedures are carefully considered, clearly presented with useful background information, and are regularly reviewed. Arrangements are generally well understood by staff and, where appropriate, learners. There is a range of detailed procedures specifically for learners, ranging from learners' first enquires to completing the programme. There has been some well-targeted staff training to support key aspects of the company's operation, including working towards teaching qualifications and raising the confidence of trainers in the delivery of key skills. Recent staff appointments and training have improved OTC's capacity to support the development of literacy and numeracy skills.

37. Feedback arrangements to aid improvement are good. Twice-yearly learner questionnaires, and annual questionnaires to employers and staff, achieve a satisfactory response rate. The company has also introduced learner exit questionnaires, and is piloting the use of subject-specific feedback, for example on the delivery of technical certificates. Results are effectively analysed, and useful summaries are analysed by managers. Learners and employers are informed of the questionnaire outcomes. There is a clear link between the feedback and the improvements put in place. For example, employers noted the need for more information on key skills, and OTC arranged briefings for them. Improvements to facilities and equipment requested by learners have been met in many cases.

38. The observation of teaching and learning is adequate. Trainers are observed twice a year, in most cases by the quality manager. Trainers receive timely feedback, and where weaknesses are identified, suitable action is taken to support trainers. The company observes teaching sessions at Oldham college where subcontracted learning is delivered. OTC has not, however, been able to observe teaching at two other colleges where some of its learners are trained. No feedback from those colleges' own quality assurance arrangements is available. OTC is aware of this weakness and is taking action to rectify it.

The company has worked well to develop an observation recording system, but this is too prescriptive in many cases, and too focused on teaching rather than learning. Insufficient use is made of subject specialists as observers. Observations do not sufficiently consider the specialist context of sessions. Further work is being carried out to develop the observation arrangements.

39. Internal verification is broadly satisfactory. However, there are significant problems with internal verification in manufacturing. Assessment decisions are largely accurate, and take appropriate account of a suitable range of evidence. Sampling plans are in place, but in some cases are not sufficiently detailed. There is too much emphasis on summative internal verification in some manufacturing provision. Internal verifiers give suitable guidance to assessors. In business administration, internal verification has been effective in improving aspects of assessment. External verifier reports are generally positive, and where matters for improvement are identified, they are effectively resolved. Formal appeals procedures are in place which meet awarding body requirements, but in the information published to learners, there is no guidance as to how informally raise concerns about assessment decisions.

40. The self-assessment process is satisfactory. OTC responds well to feedback and acts effectively on it, but it is not consistently critical of some aspects of the provision. The current self-assessment report, published in March 2006 and updated in July 2006, was the eighth produced by the company. Most staff, learners, employers and partners contributed to its development. The report was produced by senior managers. Useful events were staged where members of the OTC board, and another local provider tested the judgements. Inspectors found that the report was largely accurate in its assessment of leadership and management. The report was less accurate in its assessment of engineering, where, in some cases, inspectors identified additional strengths and weaknesses. In business administration, some identified strengths are no more than normal practice.

41. Appropriate data is collected, and its recording, auditing, analysis and reporting for contract compliance purposes is satisfactory. In engineering there is good analysis of learner recruitment, progression, and attainment. Information is well presented in graphical form, and is used effectively to monitor and guide improvement. The analysis methods have been developed by staff within the engineering area. In other areas, analysis of learner progress data is insufficient, with little detailed information used. The sharing of good practice on the use of progression data is insufficient, although a useful learner monitoring programme, developed in engineering, is now being implemented in other areas.

AREAS OF LEARNING

Engineering and manufacturing technologies

Grade 3

Contributory areas:	Number of learners	Contributory grade
Engineering Apprenticeships for young people	100	3
Manufacturing technologies Train to Gain	57	3

42. There are currently 100 learners on engineering programmes and 57 learners on manufacturing programmes working towards NVQs at levels 2 and 3. Of the engineering learners 30 are apprentices and 70 are advanced apprentices. The rest are on Train to Gain, of whom 22 are working towards level 2 NVQs in business improvement techniques and 35 are working towards level 2 NVQs in plant operations. The typical duration of an apprenticeship and advanced apprenticeship programme is 21 months and 42 months respectively. The typical duration of a manufacturing NVQ at level 2 is eight months. Learners are recruited directly from schools, through Connexions, or directly by employers. Successful learners are then interviewed by member companies for employment. Initial assessment is carried out by OTC and is used to aid the choice of apprenticeship and identify required additional support. This is provided by specialist OTC staff. All engineering learners attend the OTC training centre on block or day release to work towards an NVQ at level 2 in performing engineering operations, key skills at level 2, and the technical certificate. Upon completion of their NVQ the remainder of their training is carried out in the workplace, working towards an NVQ at level 3, and also attending either the Oldham College or the OTC training centre for one day a week to complete the technical certificate. Manufacturing learners attend the training centre to attend a three-day or five-day course on lift truck training and are then visited in the workplace by assessors. OTC delivers a number of technical certificates in the training centre. Some learners attend Oldham College to work towards their technical certificate. A team of qualified assessors visits the workplace every eight to 10 weeks to carry out learners' progress reviews. There are more frequent assessment visits for manufacturing learners, typically every two weeks. Internal verification is carried out by appropriately qualified OTC staff.

Strengths

- good recording and monitoring of learners' progress
- very effective learner support
- effective working relationships with employers
- particularly effective actions to improve the provision

Weaknesses

- weak aspects of internal verification
- insufficient use of ILT

Achievement and standards

43. Success rates on engineering programmes are satisfactory and improving. Success rates on advanced apprenticeship programmes have improved from 42 per cent in 2003-04 to 48 per cent in 2004-05. This is slightly above the national average of 45 per cent. Success rates on apprenticeship programmes have improved significantly from 23 per cent in 2003-04 to 56 per cent in 2004-05. This is well above the national average of 41 per cent. Figures for current learners due to complete in 2005-06 indicate that on advanced apprenticeships the success rate is currently 56 per cent and on apprenticeship programmes is currently 61 per cent. The overall success rate on Train to Gain programmes is satisfactory at 71 per cent.

44. Learners acquire good skills in the workplace and quickly gain sufficient competence to work with minimum supervision on demanding tasks in the workplace. Portfolios are satisfactory and include a suitable range of diverse evidence.

Programme	End Year	Success Rate	No, of learners	Provider NVQ Rate	National NVQ Rate	Provider framework rate	National framework rate
Advanced Apprenticeships	2003-04	overall	26	62	57	42	46
		timely	24	29	34	17	27
	2004-05	overall	29	62	57	48	45
		timely	31	45	33	32	25
Apprenticeships	2003-04	overall	13	77	48	23	32
		timely	14	43	22	0	13
	2004-05	overall	9	78	52	56	41
		timely	7	71	27	43	19

For details of how to calculate overall and timely success rates please refer to the "Quality Improvement Pack" (available from the Learning and Skills Council's website: www.lsc.gov.uk).

The quality of provision

45. The strength of good recording and monitoring of learners' progress, identified at the previous inspection, has been maintained. Good systems are in place to record and monitor progress. All trainers and training advisers maintain good records for individual learners. This procedure is carried out for practical and background knowledge sessions. Detailed spreadsheets have been developed to record learners' achievements. These are displayed in classroom and workshop areas. Trainers maintain a master copy in their files. Learners and training staff can, at any time, identify an individual's progress and take appropriate action to improve progress or provide necessary support. Training staff have developed a graphical display that compares learners' progress against their predicted achievement date. This allows immediate identification of those learners having difficulty maintaining progress so an action plan can be devised. This is used effectively by training advisers when they visit the workplace. For example, one training adviser worked with the employer and learner to agree a suitable action plan to improve progress. Within the 12-week review period the learner was provided with appropriate support and improved

his progress.

46. Learners continue to receive very effective support from appropriately qualified staff. This was identified as a strength at the previous inspection. OTC has encouraged many staff to achieve qualifications in supporting learners with literacy or numeracy needs. Initial advice and guidance is good, and provides useful information for learners before starting their programmes, and ongoing guidance when needed. Qualified tutors use the initial diagnostic assessments to plan and provide appropriate learner support in the training centre. Learners work appropriately through workbooks, with assistance from tutors, to improve their literacy and numeracy skills. OTC's assessors, who visit learners in the workplace, liaise frequently with support tutors to continue the support on employers' premises. Staff frequently visit learners in the workplace and provide good individual support on a regular basis. Learner progress is closely monitored and short-term targets are effectively set to enable employers to provide appropriate training and resources. OTC has provided good support to help learners gain sustainable employment or to find alternative employment. Most learners have mentors in the workplace, many of whom have received training or instruction in the requirements and structure of the qualifications.

47. OTC has developed very effective working relationships with employers. Employers are very co-operative with OTC's staff in allowing access to learners in the workplace. OTC ensures that assessment and training in the workplace does not interrupt employers' business operations. Often, assessment activities are planned to include specific workplace tasks required by the employer. OTC's staff have benefited from shadowing key personnel in workplaces in order to gain a better understanding of working practices. Assessment and training activities are now better planned. NVQ units within frameworks have been carefully selected, in consultation with employers, to ensure they match business needs and workplace activities. Employers are very supportive of training.

48. OTC provides an adequate range of programmes. Learners have access to a range of units within their NVQ and these directly meet their own needs and the needs of their employers.

49. Assessment is satisfactory. It is fair, accurate and well planned. Assessment is carried out in the training centre and in the workplace by qualified assessors from OTC. Assessment for advanced apprenticeships and for Train to Gain learners is carried out in the workplace. Good use is made of workplace mentors and supervisors to provide witness testimonies.

50. Resources are satisfactory. Since the previous inspection, improvements have been made to classroom accommodation, which is now bright, spacious and adequately furnished. Good, informative posters are displayed throughout the centre to promote interest in engineering. Engineering work pieces, produced by learners, are displayed in the classrooms. Workshops are adequately equipped with an appropriate range of machinery. Some machines are not of current industry standard but are fit for purpose in meeting NVQ requirements. Safety notices are prominently displayed in workshops. Some machines do not have digital readout facilities. Staff are sufficiently qualified and appropriately experienced.

51. Teaching and learning is satisfactory. Lessons are planned and managed well. There

is an appropriate mix of background knowledge and practical activities. However, there is insufficient use of ILT to promote learning. Classrooms do not have permanently installed ILT resources. There are a number of portable laptop computers and electronic projection devices available, but these are not used. ILT is not used to help teach topics and subjects that lend themselves well to the use of such resources. For example, tutors produce detailed drawings and develop good exercises for future practical work on chalkboards. These are erased on completion of the lesson, only to be required again at a later date. This causes duplication of work and valuable class time is wasted. The monitoring of teaching and learning in engineering is carried out by non-vocational staff who are not qualified to judge the technical aspects of the session. Grades awarded through the provider's own observations of teaching and learning were higher overall than those given by inspectors.

52. Key skills teaching is satisfactory. OTC has produced very well-prepared key skills learning materials. Assignments have been designed around engineering concepts, but are not yet fully integrated into the NVQ core units.

Leadership and management

53. OTC has introduced several effective measures to improve the engineering provision, since the previous inspection. For example, success rates have shown continuous improvement and are now satisfactory. The arrangements for the support of learners with literacy and numeracy needs are now very effective. The previous weakness of inadequate monitoring of health and safety has now been rectified through more effective review practices.

54. Aspects of internal verification are weak. On manufacturing programmes, internal verification often does not take place until the programme is almost complete. This is too late for effective remedial action to be taken if a learner has not made adequate progress. On a number of programmes, there is an insufficient range of internal verification activities. No internal verification by direct observation of assessment occurs on these programmes. The only internal verification that does take place is portfolio sampling. On some programmes, some formative internal verification takes place using observation and portfolio sampling. However, in most cases, this takes place too late in the programme and feedback from verifiers to assessors is not formally followed up to ensure actions have been completed. Learners have an insufficient awareness of the role of the internal verifier and are not sufficiently aware of the outcome of internal verification events. In engineering, internal verification is not well planned. There is no overall plan to identify how internal verification will be carried out to meet the awarding body requirements. Standardisation events are not planned in detail. Portfolios do not reflect internal verification events or outcomes.

55. The self-assessment process is carried out in conjunction with staff and incorporates comments from learners and employers. A number of strengths and weaknesses identified by inspectors were not identified in the engineering section of the report.

Business administration and law

Grade 2

Contributory areas:	Number of learners	Contributory grade
Administration Apprenticeships for young people	66	2 2

56. There are currently 66 learners on business administration and law programmes, of whom 44 are administration learners, 13 are customer service learners, and nine are business management learners. Overall, 44 are apprentices and most of the other learners are advanced apprentices. There are 12 male learners and four from minority ethnic groups. OTC recruits its learners through advertisements, Connexions and employers. There are three assessors and two internal verifiers. All learners have their suitability assessed by interview and complete an assessment of their literacy, numeracy and language skills, as well as their occupational aptitude. Induction takes place at the training centre and in the workplace. OTC carries out off-the-job training at its training centre. Assessors visit apprentices in the workplace at least monthly, to provide training and assessment, and to review their progress. All learners are employed in a range of public and private sector companies.

Strengths

- good and improving success rates on apprenticeship programmes
- good off-the-job training
- particularly effective employer support for the provision
- good learner support

Weaknesses

- insufficiently clear recording of progress targets and progress reviews

Achievement and standards

57. There are good and improving success rates on apprenticeship programmes. Success rates on this programme have gradually improved since 2003-04 when 60 per cent of learners successfully achieved their apprenticeships. This rate compares favourably with a poor national average of 41 per cent. In 2004-05 the success rate increased by 7 per cent. Fifty-seven per cent of the learners due to complete in 2005-06 have already achieved. In contrast to this, the success rate for advanced apprentices in 2003-04 was zero per cent. This rate improved to 38 per cent in 2004-05. For the current year this has already risen to 66 per cent.

58. Learners produce a good standard of work. They demonstrate good administration skills in the workplace and develop good knowledge and understanding of most aspects of their work. Many are able to use spreadsheets and databases, successfully deal with difficult customers, type memos and letters, and produce complex reports, as well as being effective members of teams. Most learners achieve additional relevant qualifications. Many learners have made good progress through promotion in their company and from apprenticeships to advanced apprenticeships. Other learners have joined the armed forces and the police service, with one learner also achieving a first class honours degree. This strength was identified in the self-assessment report. The slow progress identified in the self-assessment report has now been rectified.

Programme	End Year	Success Rate	No, of learners	Provider NVQ Rate	National NVQ Rate	Provider framework rate	National framework rate
Advanced Apprenticeships	2003-04	overall	10	40	46	0	28
		timely	8	25	30	0	18
	2004-05	overall	15	53	47	33	31
		timely	14	21	35	14	23
Apprenticeships	2003-04	overall	6	83	51	67	37
		timely	6	50	25	50	18
	2004-05	overall	19	63	56	63	45
		timely	27	37	35	33	28

For details of how to calculate overall and timely success rates please refer to the "Quality Improvement Pack" (available from the Learning and Skills Council's website: www.lsc.gov.uk).

The quality of provision

59. Off-the-job training is good. Most learners attend the training centre for half a day each week. OTC provides a well-planned programme of activities to help learners build their self-confidence and develop the skills they will use in their workplace. Learners benefit from good training in a variety of tasks including telephone techniques, presentation skills, negotiation, and team-working skills. Learners receive helpful feedback from their tutor and their peers when working in the centre. They build a useful record of their off-the-job activities by completing an individual logbook. Recent improvements in key skills training now allow learners to attend a valuable half-day key skills development

workshop and to take external tests online. OTC has a wide range of good resources to support off-the-job training including textbooks and other paper-based resources. The training rooms are well equipped with computers to provide learners with access to a broad range of ILT resources. Tutors are appropriately qualified and occupationally competent.

60. There is particularly effective employer support for the provision. Employers support and encourage learners by giving them time to attend off-the-job training sessions. Most employers play an important part in the training process by adjusting work schedules to ensure that learners complete the full range of work necessary to meet the qualification requirements. Many employers provide opportunities to extend learners' skills and develop their self-confidence by supporting and encouraging them to achieve additional qualifications, such as word- and text-processing. Some employers provide additional formal training to support the government-funded training. Significant progress has been made by OTC since the previous inspection in developing good working relationships with employers. Many employers have made valuable contributions to developing these relationships by devoting the time to attend briefings and to update workplace supervisors. OTC has carried out these briefings to successfully improve the knowledge of managers and workplace supervisors about the apprenticeship frameworks.

61. Learner support is good. Assessors provide good personal support for learners and offer good guidance to those who experience personal difficulties. Pre-course advice and guidance is good and helps learners make informed choices about their programme and encourages them to consider all aspects of their career choice. Learners are effectively encouraged to continue on the programmes when experiencing personal difficulties. Where necessary, OTC has helped learners to move to different companies to help them achieve their apprenticeships. Formal additional learning support is particularly good. Currently, nine learners have been identified with additional learning needs. These learners are very well supported during off-the-job training by the essential skills tutor, and in the company by OTC training advisers, who have been specifically trained to provide this support. This learner support was identified as a strength in the self-assessment report.

62. Assessment is satisfactory. The process is fair, accurate and reliable. New assessors are assigned mentors who observe their progress and offer help and advice. Experienced assessors who join OTC are also observed to ensure they are meeting the standard of assessment required and following established company procedures. Assessment planning is satisfactory and assessment judgements are properly recorded. Initial assessment is satisfactory, using professional assessments, as well as tests for literacy, numeracy and language skills.

63. Programmes broadly meet the needs of learners and employers. The range of programmes offered is adequate. Employers work closely with OTC staff to ensure that the programmes meet effectively the requirements of the qualification. Learners are interviewed by the provider and complete a trial period to ensure that they are suited to the work environment before starting their programme.

64. The recording of targets and progress reviews is insufficiently clear. While discussions with learners about their achievements and plans for next steps in their learning programmes take place, these are not always recorded in a specific and measurable way. Progress review paperwork often reiterates short-term targets. There is a monitoring sheet

attached to individual learning plans to record unit achievements, but this does not outline in detail what a learner needs to do to in the medium and long term. There is no visual display of progress against time to help learners understand their overall progress. Progress reviews rarely mention actual skills achieved by learners at work. Aspects of personal development, and achievements from the off-the-job training, are not referred to during progress reviews. Aspects of this weakness were identified at the previous inspection.

Leadership and management

65. The provider has a comprehensive range of policies and procedures that are used effectively to manage day-to-day activities. Quality improvement measures are effective and managers play an important role in improving overall achievement and standards. Data is used effectively to manage performance. Communication within the organisation is good. Meetings are well structured and recorded and cover all important operational issues such as achievement and standards and quality improvement. Support for equality of opportunity is provided, but this is only briefly introduced at induction and is not adequately followed up with training for staff or learners. Internal verification is satisfactory, with appropriate sampling plans and useful feedback being given to assessors. Standardisation meetings help achieve consistency within the organisation and there is adequate support for new assessors. Self-assessment of the occupational area is good, and takes into account the views and comments of all relevant parties. The provider identified the strengths and weaknesses found by inspectors and accurately graded this area of provision.

