



TRAINING STANDARDS COUNCIL

INSPECTION REPORT SEPTEMBER 1998

REINSPECTION REPORT NOVEMBER 1999

Kettering Borough Training

SUMMARY

Kettering Borough Training offers training in construction, engineering, business administration, hair and beauty, and media and design. At the time of the first inspection, training in health, care and public services was good. Training in construction, engineering, business administration and hair and beauty was satisfactory. However, training in media and design (printing) was less than satisfactory. The company assures equality of opportunity for all trainees who are, generally, well supported. The overall management of training and quality assurance arrangements were less than satisfactory, particularly in relation to the management and review of subcontractors. Kettering Borough Training was reinspected 12 months after publication of the first inspection report. There have been significant improvements to training in media and design, which is now good. Trainees have good work placements and access to high-quality training resources. Assessment and internal verification systems are sound. Management of training and quality assurance arrangements are now satisfactory. The review of subcontractors and training programmes has started, but has yet to be established within day-to-day practice to inform planning for improvement.

As a result of the reinspection of Kettering Borough Training, the original published report text for media and design (printing), management of training and quality assurance has been replaced by new text, which makes reference to the original inspection findings. This summary page, the overall report introduction and the inspection findings introduction have also been amended to reflect the findings of the reinspection. All other sections of the original published report, which have not been subject to full reinspection, have been left in their original form.

GRADES

OCCUPATIONAL AREAS	GRADE
Construction	3
Engineering	3
Business administration	3
Hair & beauty	3
Health, care & public services	2
Media & design	4

REINSPECTION	GRADE
Media and design	2

GENERIC AREAS	GRADE
Equal opportunities	3
Trainee support	3
Management of training	4
Quality assurance	4

REINSPECTION	GRADE
Management of training	3
Quality assurance	3

KEY STRENGTHS

- ◆ tools and books provided to construction trainees
- ◆ wide range of learning opportunities in the workplace
- ◆ effective complaints procedure



- ◆ good employer and trainee agreements
- ◆ good retention and achievement rates in printing
- ◆ successful use of training co-ordinators to improve management of training

KEY WEAKNESSES

- ◆ not all training co-ordinators are occupationally competent
- ◆ insufficient assessment in the workplace
- ◆ lack of cohesion in co-ordination of on- and off-the-job training
- ◆ as yet unsystematic evaluation of training
- ◆ no integration of self-assessment into quality assurance measures

INTRODUCTION

1. Kettering Borough Training (KBT) was formed in 1982 and is part of Kettering Borough Council. In April 1999, the company relocated to a former drover's hall specifically refurbished for KBT by the borough council. It is now located in the centre of Kettering, close to its parent body. Over the past 16 years, the company has been directly involved in the delivery of many government-funded training programmes, including the youth opportunities programme (YOPS), youth training scheme (YTS), community programme, employment training (ET) and, more recently, youth training (YT) and training for work (TfW). All of the company's current work is funded through contracts with the Northamptonshire Chamber of Commerce, Training and Enterprise (CCTE). All trainees are working towards national vocational qualifications (NVQs) at levels 1 to 4, through work-based training for young people, modern apprenticeships or national traineeship programmes.

2. At the time of the first inspection, KBT had 260 people in training. This had changed to a total of 242 at the time of reinspection. The table below gives details of the number of trainees in each occupational area and on each of the various types of training programme available. KBT offers training in construction, engineering, business administration, hair and beauty, media and design and health, care and public services. It also offers training in agriculture and retailing and customer service, but these two areas were not inspected as there were too few trainees following programmes in these areas. All trainees are in work placements or employed in companies throughout Kettering, Corby and surrounding areas of Northamptonshire. In addition to its main modern apprentice and national traineeship programmes, the company has recently developed a building and training skills (BATS) programme in partnership with Northamptonshire CCTE, local housing associations, Kettering Borough Council and the social services. This programme is partly funded by Single Regeneration Budget (SRB) funds and is aimed at disaffected and socially excluded young people from the borough of Kettering. Training in this programme includes basic literacy, numeracy, communication skills and teamwork and leads to an NVQ at level 1 in general construction operations. Both on- and off-the-job training in this programme are facilitated by Kettering Borough Training and its parent body, the borough council. Some trainees gain work experience on housing association building sites.

3. Kettering is situated in the county of Northamptonshire close to its border with Leicestershire. In recent years, Northamptonshire has succeeded in attracting new and relocating companies to the area. A combination of easy access to major road networks and two major rail freight terminals has contributed to this success. In 1999, unemployment in Kettering was relatively low, at 2.4 per cent, compared with a national average of 3.8 per cent. Occupying an area of 233 square kilometres, with a population of 89,800, Kettering has the second largest population in the county. Those from minority ethnic groups account for 2.5 per cent of the

population in Kettering. In 1999, the percentage of school leavers achieving five or more general certificates of secondary education (GCSEs) at grade C and above in Northamptonshire was 46.7 per cent, compared with the national average of 47.9 per cent. In 1997, the comparable percentage was 42.9 per cent, compared with a national average of 53 per cent.

Occupational area	Modern apprentices	National trainees	Other work-based training	SRB funded	Total
Agriculture	1		6		7
Construction	23		20	12	55
Engineering	34	3	14		51
Business administration	29	10	20		59
Retailing & customer service	1	2	3		6
Hospitality			1		1
Hair & beauty			4		4
Health, care & public services	10	25	14		49
Media & design	10				10
TOTALS	108	40	82	12	242

INSPECTION FINDINGS

4. Prior to the first inspection, the challenges of self-assessment were new to the company. It produced its first report two months before inspection, using the Training Standards Council's draft framework documents. All staff were involved in self-assessment, and the first report from the company resulted in clear action plans to address perceived weaknesses. Some of the strengths were validated, but others were found to be no more than contractual requirements. The company, however, failed to identify several important weaknesses in the occupational area of media and design and in the overall management and quality assurance of its subcontractors.

5. Prior to reinspection, KBT updated its action plan prepared after the first inspection. It identified new grades for the areas due for reinspection. The action plan demonstrates how the company is addressing the strengths and weaknesses found during the first inspection. The company is not yet using self-assessment as an integral feature of its quality assurance arrangements, so is not systematically reviewing and evaluating training to inform longer-term planning and development. Many of the improvements noted during reinspection were a direct result of independent action by members of the small staff team at KBT.

6. A team of nine inspectors spent a total of 30 days in Kettering Borough Training during the first inspection. Inspectors examined the company and awarding bodies' documents. They interviewed five members of staff, eight subcontracted training staff, 71 trainees and held discussions with 33 local employers. They examined assessment records, trainees' work and portfolios.

7. Reinspection of media and design, management of training and quality assurance was carried out over 12 days in November 1999 by a team of three inspectors who were accompanied by a specialist in printing training. Inspectors examined trainees' records, portfolios of evidence for assessment, awarding bodies' documents, teaching and learning materials, KBT's written policies and procedures, other documents and contracts. They also observed and interviewed 24 trainees, held 60 interviews with KBT's staff, subcontractors, and others, and made visits to 14 employers.

OCCUPATIONAL AREAS

Construction

Grade 3

8. There are 45 trainees in construction at Kettering Borough Training. The company is in the process of developing a building and training skills (BATS) programme, leading to general construction operations at NVQ level 1. It also offers NVQs levels 2 and 3, including modern apprenticeships to NVQ level 3 in brickwork, carpentry/joinery, painting and decorating, plastering and plumbing.

General construction training, when fully developed, will be delivered directly by the company, with work experience available to trainees. Training for all other programmes is subcontracted through the local further education college and delivered on a day-release basis. These trainees are either employed or permanently placed with local companies. The self-assessment report identified the main strengths and weaknesses, and inspectors agreed with the grade proposed by the company.

STRENGTHS

- ◆ tools and books are provided for trainees
- ◆ trainees were involved in the selection process for the newly recruited BATS trainer
- ◆ trainees are committed, motivated and demonstrate a high level of occupational competence
- ◆ good training opportunities on the job

WEAKNESSES

- ◆ not all employers are aware of the NVQ process or their rôle in it
- ◆ poor teamwork among training co-ordinators, workplace supervisors and assessors
- ◆ reviews lack effective target-setting for on-the-job training
- ◆ slow pace of achievement for some trainees

9. Employers offer a good range of training opportunities in the workplace. In most cases, the NVQ is completed in college on a day-release basis. Employers and trainees are positive about the workplace visits made by training co-ordinators. The company offers new trainees a tool and book allowance to support them with their training programme. Trainees have a good rapport with their training co-ordinators and demonstrate a high level of occupational competence, working with minimum supervision, and are well motivated to achieve their NVQ. The three-monthly review conducted in the workplace, concentrates on non-work-related issues. The company has recently developed training in general construction operations at NVQ level 1, in an effort to improve access for young people to job opportunities in the local construction industry. When a new construction trainer is selected, trainees' views are sought.

10. Training co-ordinators are not occupationally competent and do not set targets for on-the-job training. Communication among training co-ordinators, employers and college staff is not effective. Most employers do not have a thorough understanding of the NVQ process, although they are keen to support their trainees' development. In most cases, trainees are assessed only off the job at college, even though they are able to demonstrate a high level of occupational competence through their everyday work. Some trainees are taking longer than necessary to achieve qualifications. Trainees working towards plumbing NVQs are now being

encouraged to collect more evidence of their competence from their workplace. This development has been well received by trainees and employers.

Engineering

Grade 3

11. There are 66 trainees, of whom 39 are modern apprentices; the remainder follows work-based training for young people programmes. All trainees are working towards NVQs at levels 2 and 3. The company subcontracts the off-the-job elements of the programme to a local further education college. Trainees attend college for one day each week during term time. Most assessment is carried out during these off-the-job sessions. Outside of college term time, opportunity for assessment is significantly reduced. The company's training co-ordinators visit trainees in the workplace every three months, to review progress and agree on targets for further achievement. The company's self-assessment report did not recognise the importance of some of the weaknesses found by inspectors. The grade awarded is lower than that proposed by the company.

STRENGTHS

- ◆ wide range of learning opportunities in the workplace
- ◆ trainees are enthusiastic about training
- ◆ particularly effective working relationships among trainees, training co-ordinators and assessors
- ◆ off-the-job training sessions provide opportunities for individual development

WEAKNESSES

- ◆ opportunities for assessment in the workplace are missed
- ◆ delayed development of key skills
- ◆ lack of involvement by employers in trainees' review process
- ◆ assessment opportunities restricted during college holiday periods

12. Trainees are motivated and enthusiastic about the range of learning opportunities available to them in the workplace. They work effectively with their college assessors and training co-ordinators to identify any gaps in workplace experiences. Some college sessions are flexibly arranged to help trainees to undertake individual training and assessment to fill gaps and complement the evidence of their competence, collected from the workplace.

13. Many employers regard subcontractor arrangements as traditional day-release college programmes. They are often involved in consultations on the choice of college course, but do not play an active rôle in the periodic review of trainees' progress. College staff carry out assessment during the off-the-job sessions. Assessors do, however, visit the workplace to establish a system for employers to provide witness testimony statements in support of the NVQ. Trainees' portfolios

consist mainly of written work, and a wide range of opportunities for direct observation in the workplace is missed. Employers are generally unaware of the key skills requirements in a modern apprenticeship programme. The delivery and assessment of trainees' key skills are often delayed until the latter stages of the programme.

Business administration

Grade 3

14. The company has 49 trainees, 15 trainees in accountancy and 34 in business administration. Trainees are working towards NVQs at levels 2, 3 and 4 through work-based training for young people or modern apprenticeship programmes. Three trainees are working towards accountancy NVQs at level 4. All trainees are either employed or placed with local businesses. The company provides off-the-job training, for all trainees, on a weekly basis. Training for business administration trainees takes place at the company's premises, but, for accountancy trainees, it is subcontracted to a local college of further education. Inspectors found additional strengths and weaknesses to those identified by the company and were able to support the grade awarded by the company through self-assessment.

STRENGTHS

- ◆ reorganisation of the business administration provision
- ◆ well-equipped training room
- ◆ enthusiastic and supportive work-based supervisors
- ◆ trainees' heightened awareness of key skills mapping

WEAKNESSES

- ◆ poor integration of key skills
- ◆ poor on-the-job learning opportunities for some level 3 accountancy trainees
- ◆ in accountancy, no regular formal communication between company and college

15. The business administration provision has recently been brought under the control of the company's staff. A training room with sufficient resources and industry-standard equipment has been provided in the company's premises. A named member of staff is responsible for the occupational training and another for the delivery of key skills. A key skills mapping exercise has been carried out to identify opportunities for collection of evidence in the accountancy programme. This is introduced to trainees in a standard presentation, supported by handouts and a booklet. This is a new and well-planned approach, but it is not, as yet, fully integrated within modern apprenticeship training.

16. Some accountancy NVQ level 3 trainees experience difficulty in covering the full range of skills, in their everyday work situations, for the qualification. The absence of workplace assessments, combined with the lack of formal

communications structures between the company and the college, compounds these difficulties. When problems are brought to the company's attention, it is quick to react in the trainees' best interests.

Hair & beauty

Grade 3

17. Kettering Borough Training has 22 young people working towards NVQs in hairdressing at NVQ levels 2 and 3. One trainee is a modern apprentice, and 11 are following the national traineeship route. All the trainees work in local salons, and 91 per cent of trainees are employed. The company subcontracts with two local further education colleges for off-the-job training which is provided one day each week in term time. College trainers regularly review trainees' progress during tutorial sessions. Out of term time, trainees work full time in the salons. All trainees are allocated a company training co-ordinator who reviews trainees' progress approximately every 13 weeks, either in the salon or at college. The self-assessment report accurately identified many of the strengths and weaknesses in this area. Inspectors found additional strengths and weaknesses and awarded the same grade as that proposed by the company.

STRENGTHS

- ◆ effective support from employers, trainers and training co-ordinators
- ◆ good on- and off-the-job training
- ◆ well-resourced work placements
- ◆ effective target-setting and action-planning for trainees
- ◆ well-qualified hairdressing trainers
- ◆ regular opportunities to work with clients

WEAKNESSES

- ◆ trainers, work-based supervisors and assessors do not work effectively as a team
- ◆ poor communication with employers
- ◆ key skills training not fully developed
- ◆ poor co-ordination of on- and off-the-job training

18. Enthusiastic trainees are well supported by their employers and work-based supervisors. The salons are modern and well resourced, with good product ranges to use and sell to clients. Most salons produce work of a very high standard and display staff's qualifications and hairdressing manufacturers' specialist skills certificates. All trainees have salon training sessions or opportunities to work on clients regularly. College tutors record and review trainees' progress against set targets to encourage them to gain units towards completion of the NVQ. Individual tutorials promote effective action planning and target-setting. The college

achievement and attendance reports are sent to the company and employers each term. This information is used by the company's training co-ordinators when carrying out trainees' reviews. Actions are recorded on the review form to give targets at which trainees aim before the next review.

19. Training co-ordinators are not occupationally competent in the field of hairdressing and do not work effectively with employers and trainers as a team. Workplace assessment opportunities are missed, and the co-ordination between on- and off-the-job training is poor. In the last year, trainees have had their reviews carried out by three or more different training co-ordinators, owing to staff changes. Assessment is carried out mostly in colleges' training salons. There are few links between employers and subcontracted assessment staff, and workplace supervisors are not encouraged to inform the assessment process. NVQ assessment information is not available in the salons. Trainees do not collect sufficient assessment evidence when they carry out everyday work activities. Communication with employers, who are not encouraged to be involved in trainees' reviews, is poor. The delivery and assessment of key skills are not fully integrated in the modern apprenticeship or national traineeship programmes. Over the past three years, there have been 21 leavers. Of these leavers, 12 have achieved at least one NVQ.

Health, care & public services

Grade 2

20. Kettering Borough Training has 38 trainees in care. Of these, seven trainees are modern apprentices working towards NVQ level 3 in childcare and 13 are modern apprentices working towards NVQ level 2 in care. There are eight trainees on the work-based training for young people programme, working towards NVQ level 2 in childcare and 10 trainees on the work-based training for young people programme, working towards NVQ level 2 in care. All trainees are employed and work in a variety of establishments, including nurseries, crèches and residential homes for adults with special needs. The two areas in the health, care and public services sector operate very differently from each other. Off-the-job training for NVQ level 2 childcare trainees takes place at the company's premises for one day each week, and, for level 3 childcare and all social care trainees, this happens for one day every four weeks. This training is delivered through subcontracting arrangements with a different private training company for each area. Kettering Borough Training has made strenuous efforts to develop effective training and assessment arrangements, but there is still room for further development. Peripatetic assessors, employed by subcontractors, carry out assessment in the workplace. The subcontracted trainers and assessors are appropriately qualified for their rôles. Some of the strengths identified in the self-assessment report are no more than normal practice or contractual requirement. Inspectors identified additional strengths, and a higher grade was awarded than that proposed through self-assessment.

STRENGTHS

- ◆ good integration of on- and off-the-job training
- ◆ work-based supervisors, trainers and co-ordinating staff work well as a team
- ◆ off-the-job training is effectively planned, documented and delivered
- ◆ trainers have a high level of occupational competence, qualification and experience
- ◆ there are good on-the-job training resources and learning opportunities

WEAKNESSES

- ◆ opportunities for work-based assessment are missed
- ◆ not all trainees are aware of key skills at NVQ level 2
- ◆ poor off-the-job training resources

GOOD PRACTICE

An innovative and imaginative special project was used to provide town centre shoppers with a crèche facility for two days during half term in February 1998. NVQ level 3 care trainees planned, managed and administered the crèche and, together with level 2 trainees, provided care for children aged between two and five. The project helped all trainees to gather evidence of occupational competence, and the level 3 trainees used information technology, application of number and communications key skills in the project's planning and marketing.

21. Off-the-job training in childcare and social care is well planned and delivered. Training methods are appropriate to trainees' needs; they respond well to the delivery styles used and appreciate the opportunity to manage their own learning. Trainers have a high level of occupational competence. Good use is made of opportunities to relate underpinning knowledge to trainees' job rôles and working environments. The training co-ordinator and lead trainers make regular visits to trainees in the workplace. Information on trainees' progress, on and off the job, is shared among all members of the team.

22. Although there are good-quality resources for training on the job, there are few resources in the training environment at the company's premises. Training rooms are not equipped with information technology facilities. The company helps trainees to access additional training rooms for private study and to attend additional training sessions. Peripatetic assessors carry out assessment in the workplace for trainees. This limits the availability of opportunistic assessment through observation. While workplace supervisors provide some witness testimony statements, trainees' portfolios show an over-reliance on written evidence of their competence. Some trainees at NVQ level 2 are not aware of key skills, but, at NVQ level 3, there are examples of good practice in the integration of key skills in an NVQ level 3 crèche project. Over the past three years, there have been 35 leavers. Of these leavers, eight have achieved at least one NVQ.

Media & design

Grade 2

23. There are 10 trainees taking NVQs in printing. Nine are modern apprentices. Of these, five are working towards NVQs at level 2 and four have achieved level 2 and are now working towards level 3. All trainees are employed in local printing, design and print finishing businesses in the Kettering and Northampton area. The remaining trainee is a young person completing the final year of a higher national certificate. Off-the-job training is subcontracted to two local further education

colleges. Trainees' progress both on and off the job is monitored by one of KBT's four training co-ordinators, who is not occupationally competent in the field of media and design. In the three years between 1996-97 and 1998-99, three modern apprentices have completed their training and achieved their qualification aim. Two have retained full-time employment in the printing industry and the other has entered higher education. Eleven trainees have completed their other training programmes for young people and remained in employment. Of these, three achieved NVQs at level 3, while the others achieved level 2. During the period of 1996-99, eleven trainees did not achieve their NVQ targets, but six are still employed in the printing industry, two at management level.

24. Prior to the first inspection, KBT's self-assessment report failed to identify some important weaknesses relating, in particular, to assessment and verification practices. Inspectors awarded a lower grade than KBT had given in the self-assessment report.

During the first inspection, the following main weaknesses were identified.

- ◆ lack of integration of on- and off-the-job training
- ◆ poor assessment and internal verification
- ◆ poor initial assessment
- ◆ poor accreditation of prior learning
- ◆ missed opportunities for work-based assessment
- ◆ lack of integration of key skills

25. Reinspection revealed that significant improvements had occurred in the management and operational practices associated with this occupational area. Most of the prior weaknesses had been addressed and new strengths in provision had emerged. There is better integration of on- and off-the-job training, although there is still room for improvement in this aspect. Assessment and verification are appropriate and thorough. Initial assessment occurs at the start of training for all trainees and learning support is readily available. Accreditation of prior learning is available but not used, as all trainees have little prior experience of the occupational area. Work-based assessment now occurs and key skills evidence is drawn from occupational practices. Inspectors awarded a higher grade than that given by KBT in the action plan it had prepared for reinspection.

STRENGTHS

- ◆ good-quality work placements
- ◆ exceptional off-the-job training resources
- ◆ good retention and achievement rates
- ◆ good career opportunities

WEAKNESSES

- ◆ lack of cohesion in co-ordination of on- and off-the-job training

26. Trainees are employed within a variety of printing companies, from small to medium size and ranging from traditional design and print operations to specialised packaging and print finishing organisations. Facilities and equipment are good. Trainees work on commercial jobs to realistic timescales. On-the-job training and support are good.

27. Off-the-job training resources are outstanding. One of the subcontracted colleges is the national skills centre for print training. At the time of the first inspection, trainees did not have access to this resource. For trainees from small companies with limited facilities, or for those from highly specialised production units, off-the-job training broadens their experiences and skills. Attendance at off-the-job training sessions is good.

28. Off-the-job assessment is thorough and trainees' portfolios are of a good standard and well presented. Tutorial reviews and portfolio-building sessions take place at weekly intervals. Internal verification of assessment practices is in place and is carried out twice per year by two qualified staff. Evidence of internal verification is supported by appropriate records. External verification reports are now received by KBT and indicate that the awarding body is satisfied with the assessment and verification practices of both subcontractors. Key skills are delivered and assessed by appropriately qualified staff. The evidence base for key skills assessment is drawn from occupational area activities. Workplace assessment by the subcontractors is now occurring. Though still in its infancy, workplace assessment is already preventing trainees from repeating tasks for assessment purposes off the job. Trainees' progress is reviewed by KBT's training co-ordinator at three-monthly intervals. Appropriately managed and detailed records are maintained, and communication with employers and training subcontractors regarding reviews is sound.

29. All trainees have a clear understanding of their progress towards qualification. They are well motivated. A few trainees take longer than necessary to achieve their qualifications, especially where there is delayed work-based assessment owing to pressure of work in the trainees' workplaces. Most trainees achieve their individual training plan target. Where they leave the programme before completion of the NVQ, most continue in full-time employment.

30. The co-ordination of on- and off-the-job training is improving, but trainers at the subcontracted colleges are not yet fully aware of all trainees' job roles, so are unable to determine the best assessment opportunities in all cases. Some work has been done by training co-ordinators, trainers and trainees to facilitate more frequent work-based assessment, and so improve trainers' understanding, but the training given at the colleges and workplaces are not yet fully co-ordinated.

GENERIC AREAS

Equal opportunities

Grade 3

31. Kettering Borough Training has 260 trainees on work-based training for young people and modern apprenticeship programmes. Of these trainees, 61 per cent are men. In the Borough of Kettering, 53 per cent of the working age population is male. The percentage of trainees from minority ethnic groups is 1.5. In the Kettering area, 2.5 per cent of the population is from minority ethnic groups. The company has adopted the equal opportunities policy of Kettering Borough Council. However, the company does not have any opportunity to contribute to the annual review of this policy. The company has a complaints procedure which is explained to trainees at induction and documented in the trainees' handbook. Where it has been necessary for trainees to follow this procedure, complaints have been dealt with openly and effectively. Each stage of the complaint is fully documented and monitored to ensure that a satisfactory conclusion is reached. The grade awarded by inspectors was the same as that proposed by the company in its self-assessment report.

STRENGTHS

- ◆ clear guidelines to employers and trainees for equal opportunities
- ◆ effective complaints procedure
- ◆ support for trainees to train in occupations traditionally dominated by one gender
- ◆ a tailored programme developed for socially excluded young people

WEAKNESSES

- ◆ inadequate access to training rooms for those with mobility difficulties
- ◆ equal opportunities data are not systematically analysed
- ◆ data not used to target under-represented groups

32. The company's agreement with local employers requires confirmation that they will adhere to its equal opportunities policy and complaints procedure. In cases where an employer does not have an equal opportunities policy, the agreement contains a draft statement which the employer is invited to adopt and sign.

33. There are currently four male trainees in hairdressing salons and two male trainees in the care sector. In the past, there have been female trainees in motor-vehicle training. An employer in the printing sector received 16 applicants through the company for one job, for which there was an even gender split. The employer chose a woman for a job which would traditionally have gone to a man. While the company has not actively promoted recruitment against traditional stereotyping, it is, nevertheless, supportive in its responses. Most trainees are placed with an employer within a short time of making an application.

34. The Kettering Building and Training Skills (BATS) programme was designed three months ago to ensure training opportunities for disaffected young people, who may not normally be attracted to mainstream training. Trainees work on housing association building sites where they can contribute to the building of social housing, while also improving their own skills and working towards a NVQ. The recently developed training room for business administration trainees is on the third floor of the company's premises, and no lift has been provided for those with mobility difficulties. Alternative arrangements for those with a disability have been made, and parking and access to the ground floor are suitably designed.

35. Equal opportunities data are collected and monitored by the CCTE, however, the company has not systematically used them to identify the impact of training on minority groups. The non-achievement of trainees from minority ethnic groups and female modern apprentices has not been tackled.

Trainee support

Grade 3

36. The company is committed to supporting trainees in line with its mission statement. Trainees are assessed on entry and their career goals discussed at an initial interview with the training co-ordinator. There is an induction process where policies and procedures are explained, and guidance on NVQs and evidence-collection is given. Training co-ordinators have regular and frequent contact with trainees, giving good pastoral support. Reviews in the workplace are carried out on a three-monthly basis. Trainees and employers are issued with a comprehensive handbook, detailing all aspects of the training programme and support arrangements. The self-assessment report was generally accurate in identifying several strengths and weaknesses in this area, and inspectors were able to support the grade awarded through self-assessment.

STRENGTHS

- ◆ comprehensive information to support the induction programme
- ◆ trainee-related information is well documented
- ◆ good pastoral support for trainees

WEAKNESSES

- ◆ initial assessment does not inform individual training plans
- ◆ workplace supervisors are not always involved in the review process
- ◆ reviews in some occupational areas do not happen on agreed dates
- ◆ not all training co-ordinators are occupationally competent

37. There is an induction programme, well supported by a comprehensive trainee handbook, for all trainees. Written in plain language and well presented, the handbook details every aspect of the training programme, making effective use of

diagrams and flow charts. Information, held in the filing system, on trainees is comprehensive and thoroughly completed. The company provides a good level of pastoral support to trainees on and off the job, and trainees are aware of those to whom they should go for advice and guidance.

38. An initial assessment is provided for all trainees, but does not inform individual training plans in relation to basic and key skills. Additional support needs are not identified at an early stage. There is a three-monthly review process, which, in some occupational areas, does not always take place according to the dates recorded and agreed on in individual training plans. These reviews are carried out, in the workplace, by training co-ordinators who are not occupationally competent in their areas of responsibility. The review does not usually involve the workplace supervisor and does not set challenging occupational targets or effectively review progress towards the completion of an individual training plan.

Management of training

Grade 3

39. In the last year, KBT has moved premises, gained the Investors in People Standard and has employed an additional training co-ordinator. All staff have job descriptions which clearly describe their roles and responsibilities. Staff are familiar with KBT's values and business plan. There is an annual appraisal process with targets linked to business goals, and an employee development system that includes formal training and mentoring for new staff. The company is an active member of the Northamptonshire Training and Development Network, which aims to share good practice and explore new developments. New staff receive a planned and documented induction into the organisation, which includes a discussion on, and copy of, the business plan, and they are set targets for achievement against the business plan.

The main weaknesses identified by the first inspection were as follows.

- ◆ co-ordination of on- and off-the-job training is poor
- ◆ poor monitoring and evaluation of subcontracted provision
- ◆ assessment staff are not effectively deployed in the workplace
- ◆ good practice not shared across occupational areas

40. A number of improvements have been made in accordance with the revised action plan, although some of these have taken place very recently and the practical effects have yet to be seen. Some delay occurred because of the move to refurbished premises in April 1999. Inspectors agreed with the grade given in the revised action plan prepared for reinspection.

STRENGTHS

- ◆ successful use of training co-ordinators to improve management of training
- ◆ effective staff appraisal and development
- ◆ comprehensive service-level agreements with main subcontractors
- ◆ good communication between all parties

WEAKNESSES

- ◆ inconsistent co-ordination of on- and off-the-job training
- ◆ workplace assessment not yet fully implemented in all occupational areas
- ◆ little gathering and analysis of data
- ◆ no formal sharing of good practice

41. The training co-ordinators play a key role in the successful management of training at KBT. They are the catalysts through which good relationships between the employers, sub-contractors and the trainees, are achieved. Co-ordinators take an active role in encouraging and guiding trainees, and work with sub-contractors to encourage the use of workplace assessment and expert witness testimony. Trainees' reviews are now copied to employers and employers are frequently involved in the review meetings.

42. KBT uses its parent organisation's staff appraisal system. All staff have well recorded annual appraisals, subsequent reviews and personal development plans. Each has a copy of the business plan and team targets, as well as their own personal targets. All staff have gained the assessor awards, including the administration assistant, and this helps them to monitor the assessments conducted by the subcontractors. External business agreements are in place with major subcontractors and are awaiting signature by others. These define in considerable detail what KBT expects from the subcontractor and what it will provide in return in support of the trainee. Senior college staff, including a college principal, site principal and brokerage manager, sign these agreements. As the agreements are newly in place, there is not yet a developed system to monitor and evaluate the service provided under the agreements. KBT is working with its main subcontractor to develop the system.

43. Formal and informal communications within KBT and between KBT and the other parties are regular and productive. All staff can, and do, raise items for the team meeting agenda and the manager shares all relevant information with staff. Such meetings produce benefits for both business and the trainees. There is an atmosphere of mutual support among KBT's staff.

44. Co-ordination of on- and off-the-job training is inconsistent between occupational areas. It is generally better where KBT conducts training and assessment itself rather than where these tasks are performed by subcontractors. However, there are areas of good practice within subcontracted provision. Training

co-ordinators look for opportunities to encourage greater cohesion. Similarly the extent of workplace assessment varies, being generally good where KBT controls the whole process but less so in subcontracted provision. In some areas, such as in construction, workplace assessment is being actively promoted, and workplace evidence record diaries have been issued to trainees in engineering. Assessors' visits are being scheduled for these areas, but workplace assessment has not yet started.

45. KBT collects data as required by the TEC and by its parent body but it does not gather and analyse data to inform management about training issues to aid planning and development. For example, there are no trends analyses of year-on-year achievement rates by occupational sector, NVQ level, or subcontractor, even though the raw data are available. However, overall NVQ achievement rates have improved consistently over the last three years. Good practice is shared between team members but not in a systematic and routine manner, although a regular team meeting structure is well established.

Quality assurance

Grade 3

46. The company has introduced a number of procedures and strategies to address the weaknesses in quality assurance identified by inspectors in September 1998. The arrangements for the recording and monitoring of health and safety in subcontractors and employers are now very thorough. On an annual basis, all subcontractors and employers are fully assessed for compliance with health and safety requirements by training co-ordinators. Responsibility for quality assurance within the company is clear, and there is compliance with the requirements of awarding bodies and other external agents.

The main weaknesses identified by the first inspection were as follows.

- ◆ trainees' achievement data do not inform planning of continuous improvement
- ◆ no evaluation of training effectiveness
- ◆ no quality assurance of subcontracted assessment or verification systems
- ◆ poor systems for recording and monitoring employers' health and safety checks

47. Systems are now in place to allow the company to review the quality of training and subcontracted provision. Data are becoming more readily available for evaluation but are, as yet, not easy to access through information technology systems. Inspectors agreed with the grade given in the revised action plan prepared for reinspection. Some of the former weaknesses still exist, but inspectors recognised the level of improvement in these areas since the first inspection.

STRENGTHS

- ◆ good staff involvement in the quality assurance process
- ◆ evaluation of aspects of training yields positive results

WEAKNESSES

- ◆ no integration of self-assessment into quality assurance measures
- ◆ as yet unsystematic evaluation of training

48. Staff are effectively involved at the operational level of quality assurance implementation. Training co-ordinators display a good understanding of the importance of quality assurance, and work closely with subcontractors and employers to ensure that procedures are implemented and monitored. Internal verification systems relating to both in-house and subcontracted provision is monitored. Staff membership of subcontractors' advisory panels provides access to information relating to training and assessment, and an opportunity to contribute to identified issues and concerns which require action. Recently appointed staff feel confident in contributing to quality assurance issues, and one example of this is work undertaken by a new member of staff to relate a data-gathering questionnaire to the criteria in the self-assessment guidelines of *Raising the Standard*. Self-assessment is viewed by staff as an integral part of the quality assurance framework, but it is not systematic throughout KBT.

49. The company is active in comparing the merits of in-house and subcontracted training, and data are now collected to inform this comparison. During the past year, this process, applied to business administration, has resulted in a decision to deliver business administration training in-house, and has lead to improved achievements and retention among trainees. The initiative has resulted in the company being granted postal verification by the awarding body for business administration. Data gathered have supported decisions relating to the integration of key skills, and to the training of staff in teaching and assessing key skills. The initial questionnaire used to gather data for comparison purposes has itself been revised, indicative of an emerging culture of improvement within the company.

50. The company produced a self-assessment report before the first inspection in September 1998. Following inspection, an action plan was produced addressing issues highlighted in the first inspection report. In preparation for reinspection, a revised action plan was prepared. The plan guided inspectors to action taken to address issues stemming from the first inspection. In preparation for reinspection, the opportunity has not been taken to introduce self-assessment as a regular feature of quality assurance arrangements throughout the organisation. The company has not yet recognised the need to regularly encompass review and evaluation of all organisational aspects, as part of its ethos. Data are not systematically gathered and analysed for all parts of the organisation to inform judgements and planning. The energy of operational staff, who demonstrate by their actions a genuine commitment to seeking improvement to the benefit of trainees, is not focused and used to best effect.