



TRAINING STANDARDS COUNCIL

INSPECTION REPORT OCTOBER 1998

## Ridge Danyers College

## SUMMARY

The standard of training at Ridge Danyers College varies widely, with some substantial weaknesses. Classes at the college are well organised and well taught. Training at work is sometimes unplanned and trainees' achievements are not always properly recorded. There is no systematic approach to managing work-based training, and there is no work-based training in some areas during college holidays. Arrangements to secure equality of opportunity are good.

### GRADES

OCCUPATIONAL AREAS	GRADE
Business administration	3
Leisure, sport & travel	3
Health, care & public services	3

GENERIC AREAS	GRADE
Equal opportunities	2
Trainee support	3
Management of training	3
Quality assurance	3

### KEY STRENGTHS

- ◆ very effective working relationships between trainees and trainers
- ◆ good resources at college
- ◆ good teaching at college
- ◆ well-planned induction to training
- ◆ good equal opportunities practice
- ◆ strong staff development arrangements

### KEY WEAKNESSES

- ◆ widely variable achievement among occupational sectors
- ◆ poor initial assessment and inadequate individual training plans
- ◆ poor co-ordination of on- and off-the-job training
- ◆ underdeveloped key skills provision
- ◆ quality assurance arrangements do not address some elements of work-based training

## INTRODUCTION

1. Ridge Danyers College delivers work-based training under the brand name Summit. It is funded mainly by Stockport and High Peak Training and Enterprise Council (TEC). In addition, there are four adult trainees on a contract with Manchester TEC. Training is available in business administration, including accounts and information technology; retail and customer service; sport and travel and care. Programmes are offered for both young people and unemployed adults. One hundred and seven trainees are studying for national vocational qualifications (NVQs) at levels 2 and 3, seven of whom are modern apprentices. The total of 107 trainees at the time of inspection is less than half the number in training when the college's self-assessment report was compiled.

2. The college was formed by the amalgamation of The Ridge College, Marple and Margaret Danyers College, Cheadle. Both sites are in south Manchester. The college serves the urban borough of Stockport, as well as the rural High Peak area which includes part of the Peak District National Park. The proportion of people from minority ethnic groups living in this area is very small. Stockport is relatively affluent, with an average unemployment rate in July 1997 of 3.6 per cent. However, the area includes districts such as Brinnington, which has an unemployment rate of 11 per cent, and Glossop in High Peak, which has an unemployment rate of 10 per cent. The Greater Manchester average for unemployment is 6 per cent, compared with the national average at 5.1 per cent. The travel-to-work area which includes the college also comprises Manchester Airport and the Trafford Centre. The second runway at the airport is likely to create 50,000 extra jobs in the distribution sector and business services. The new out-of-town shopping complex in Trafford will provide about 7,000 more jobs. The Commonwealth Games will be held in Manchester in 2002, providing additional commercial development and raising international awareness of the area.

3. The number of Stockport school leavers achieving five or more general certificates of secondary education (GCSEs) at grade C and above was 50.2 per cent, compared with the national average of 53 per cent, for 1997. The proportion of young people who remain in full-time education after the age of 16 is 70 per cent.

## INSPECTION FINDINGS

4. The college prepared its first self-assessment report for inspection, using the Council's draft guidelines. Training was provided by the TEC for two members of college staff and passed on by them to vocational and contract teams. Each of these groups of staff produced a section on their own area of work. The contract manager combined individual sections in a single report. Two members of the college senior management team oversaw the process and the self-assessment report was submitted to the board of governors. The college prepared a separate self-assessment report for the Further Education Funding Council (FEFC) which carried out an inspection at the same time as the Council. The college has previously undergone FEFC inspection.

5. A team of eight inspectors spent a total of 29 days at the college during September and October 1998. All aspects of training were inspected, including tutorials, trainees' induction and assessments. A range of documents, trainees' records, assessment portfolios, contract information, awarding bodies' reports and policies was evaluated. Inspectors interviewed 69 trainees, 17 work-placement providers and 27 college staff.

Grades awarded to instruction sessions

	GRADE 1	GRADE 2	GRADE 3	GRADE 4	GRADE 5	TOTAL
Business administration		3	2	1		6
Leisure, sport & travel		1	1			2
Health, care & public services	2	4	2	1		9
<b>Total</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>17</b>

## OCCUPATIONAL AREAS

### Business administration

**Grade 3**

6. The college has 27 trainees in this occupational area. Three are modern apprentices, 13 are adults in training for work programmes and 11 are youth trainees working towards NVQ levels 2 and 3. There are programmes in administration, information technology and accounting. Each week, trainees have four days' work placement and attend the college for one day's off-the-job training. The college is well resourced for administration and information technology. It has simulated offices. Accountancy trainees have the opportunity to achieve the awards of the Association of Accounting Technicians (AAT). The strengths cited in the college's self-assessment report were regarded as no more than normal practice or could not be confirmed by inspectors. Two of the weaknesses were confirmed. Additional strengths and weaknesses were identified. Inspectors awarded a lower grade than that proposed by the college in its self-assessment report.

### *STRENGTHS*

- ◆ good resources
- ◆ particularly effective working relationships between trainers and trainees
- ◆ regular interviews used to update trainees on their progress
- ◆ trainees understand how they will be assessed

### *WEAKNESSES*

- ◆ inconsistent internal verification
- ◆ underdeveloped key skills training
- ◆ unsatisfactory achievement levels in information technology
- ◆ limited workplace assessment

7. Trainers are particularly good at motivating trainees and encouraging them to take an active part in the learning process. Trainees feel comfortable in the college. They receive substantial help from staff. Reviews of trainees' progress are carried out regularly. In information technology programmes, targets for learning are set and they are monitored and reviewed at the college. Trainees have ready access to equipment. In college, there is a student forum which meets monthly to consider the support offered to work-based trainees. Membership is drawn from across the college and includes staff from both sites in Marple and Cheadle.

8. The development and assessment of key skills are poor in the modern apprenticeship programme. Internal verification procedures are well defined but they are not implemented consistently. Some trainees' portfolios were not verified between September 1997 and May 1998. Trainees are not often assessed in the workplace. Learning opportunities at work are missed. Information technology trainees did not attend the college during its summer vacation between July and September 1998. Learning at work during this period was neither recorded nor assessed. The number of NVQs achieved by each 100 leavers dropped from 61 in 1996-97, to only 31 in 1997-98.

### **Leisure, sport & travel**

### **Grade 3**

9. There are 17 trainees on sport and recreation programmes. Three are modern apprentices and the remainder is on other work-based training programmes at NVQ levels 1 to 3. There are 13 trainees on travel services programmes, nine at level 2 and four at level 3. There is one modern apprentice who has completed an NVQ at level 3 in travel services, but has yet to complete the key skills units. Trainees have the opportunity to achieve additional qualifications. In sport and recreation, placements are in the private and public sector, and achievement rates are above average. In travel, the achievement rate of 44 per cent remains substantially poorer than the average, despite an improvement in the last two years. Staff have recent vocational experience. Many of the strengths cited in the self-assessment report were no more than normal practice. Additional strengths and weaknesses were identified by inspectors, who awarded the same grade as that proposed by the college.

*STRENGTHS*

- ◆ frequent assessments in the workplace
- ◆ good modern resources
- ◆ good off-the-job training
- ◆ flexible individual training in sport and recreation

*WEAKNESSES*

- ◆ low achievement and retention in travel
- ◆ poor assessment portfolios in travel
- ◆ no integration of key skills in modern apprenticeship programmes
- ◆ trainees' achievements in travel not recorded regularly
- ◆ individual training plans not kept up-to-date

10. In sport and recreation, there is close co-ordination between on- and off-the-job training. The NVQ co-ordinator ensures that trainees know how to demonstrate their growing competence, using a wide variety of evidence. Work-based assessors are used to take account of naturally occurring evidence. Trainees' progress is closely monitored. They are set realistic but demanding targets for learning. Training programmes are sufficiently flexible to meet individual requirements. Trainees achieve the necessary occupational competence.

11. Trainees in travel receive regular off-the-job training in the college's well-resourced accommodation. There is a wide variety of learning materials. An assessor frequently observes trainees at work. Planning is informal with formal records of assessments made retrospectively at the end of the programme. Individual training plans are not kept up to date. Assessment portfolios at level 2 have no index of their contents and contain only routine material. For one unit in which trainees are required to produce a display, portfolios included only standard leaflets. The retention rate among trainees is low. There is a lack of work placements.

**Health, care & public services****Grade 3**

12. The college has 16 youth trainees on the NVQ level 2 childcare programme, and three at NVQ level 3. In addition, there are two adults training at each level. Trainees spend four days each week throughout the year in a wide variety of workplaces. Half a day's off-the-job training at the college is given each week for 38 weeks a year. The number of trainees has halved in the past year, due to the completion of a contract with Manchester TEC. The adult care programme has 20 government-funded trainees and six 'men into care' trainees who benefit from European social funds. Ten youth trainees are working towards NVQ level 2 and six towards level 3. The unemployed adults and 'men into care' trainees are all working towards NVQ level 2. All level 3 trainees, two 'men into care' and seven level 2 trainees are employed. Work placements and employers include nursing homes; day-care centres for elderly people; day and residential centres for adults with additional

needs and challenging behaviour; the Cerebral Palsy Association; and MIND, the National Association for Mental Health. The strengths in the self-assessment report were confirmed and additional weaknesses were identified. Inspectors awarded a lower grade than that proposed by the college.

### *STRENGTHS*

- ◆ good planning and teaching at the college
- ◆ strong support for trainees
- ◆ trainers have recent occupational experience

### *WEAKNESSES*

- ◆ unsatisfactory assessment and internal verification
- ◆ individual training plans not kept up to date

#### **GOOD PRACTICE**

*Care staff have built an excellent link with a local group of residential homes for elderly people, which have trainees from the college. The care co-ordinator delivers NVQ training to a group of employees on site. The approach is being extended to other work-experience providers to enhance learning at work.*

13. Trainers work well together planning training at the college. Schemes of work and lesson plans are good. Teaching groups are small and trainees find it easy to involve themselves in the full range of learning activities. Staff are knowledgeable. They are skilled in using trainees' own experience to make lessons come alive. Accommodation at the college is good. There are excellent learning materials, resources and equipment. Induction is thorough. Trainers are effective in helping both trainees and work-based supervisors. They make regular visits and give training sessions at work. Clear targets for learning, which are set by trainers, help trainees to succeed. A group called 'Gone, but not forgotten' no longer attracts funding from the TEC, but the college nevertheless continues to support it. Portfolio-building sessions help trainees to complete their awards promptly, once formal lessons have finished. One trainee at level 3 in care, is now mentoring other trainees at work and is about to start an assessor qualification. Trainers provide extra assignments when trainees ask for them in order that awards can be achieved more quickly.

14. In childcare, some staff are unaware of the need to assess trainees' knowledge. Trainees answer identical lists of questions. This process provides evidence of some of the required knowledge, but trainees are not clear about how what they have done relates to the NVQ performance criteria. The necessity for trainees to write their answers to assignments hampers some of them. More assessment by direct observation is needed to meet the awarding bodies' requirements. Element record sheets are signed to assert competence, when the evidence provided by trainees is insufficient to meet the performance criteria. Trainees' portfolios are internally verified by staff who are working towards the appropriate award. Records of the samples of trainees' work are still being developed. Internal verification of care portfolios takes place only when awards are completed.

## GENERIC AREAS

### Equal opportunities

### Grade 2

15. The college is committed to accepting students for whom it can provide suitable courses and support, irrespective of ability, age, gender, race or background. This statement is the basis of entitlement for all members of the community, whether they study at the college or at work. The college has worked hard to ensure that its staff value work-based training equally with formal courses. Inspection confirmed the strengths in the self-assessment report and found that most weaknesses had been addressed. They awarded the same grade as that proposed by the college in its self-assessment report.

#### *STRENGTHS*

- ◆ rigorous implementation of equal opportunities policies and procedures
- ◆ regular review of equal opportunities practice at all levels
- ◆ staff and trainees are protected against discrimination and harassment
- ◆ very effective complaints procedure
- ◆ positive action to support trainees with disabilities

#### *WEAKNESSES*

- ◆ not all promotional material includes an equal opportunities statement

16. Every aspect of the equal opportunities policy is reviewed annually. Plans for improvement are drawn up, which identify the member of staff responsible and target dates for fulfilment. There is a reference group for equal opportunities, comprising senior managers and including the principal, a student support group and a student project group. Data about trainees, from application to achievement, are systematically monitored throughout the college. Staff and trainees in the care, and sport and recreation programmes are acutely aware of equal opportunities issues. There is a policy to counter harassment. There is a very effective complaints procedure, giving staff and trainees a choice of formal and informal approaches. The college guarantees a reply to a complaint within 24 hours and that it will be dealt with within 10 days. The college has strong links with a local college for severely disabled adults, and there are examples of outstanding support for students with disabilities. There have been initiatives to encourage women in information technology and men in care. Job advertisements include the disability symbol, and there is an implicit regard for the needs of the individual in promotional leaflets. Not all of this literature includes a statement on equal opportunities.



## Trainee support

## Grade 3

17. With the exception of applicants who are employed before they start youth training, all prospective trainees are invited to attend an initial interview. At interview their interests, needs and suitability for training are assessed. Prospective youth trainees who are already in employment are usually interviewed at work. A further interview with college tutors is used to provide vocational guidance. All trainees are given an induction to their programmes, during which they are informed of their rights and responsibilities. Staff make regular assessment and welfare visits to trainees at work. The self-assessment report did not identify several weaknesses identified by inspectors. As a result, inspectors awarded a lower grade than that proposed by the college.

### *STRENGTHS*

- ◆ potential trainees are given relevant, accurate and objective advice
- ◆ well-planned induction to programmes
- ◆ trainees informed of their rights and responsibilities
- ◆ frequent opportunities to discuss progress with staff
- ◆ personal counselling and advice help trainees to succeed

### *WEAKNESSES*

- ◆ trainees' basic skills not systematically assessed on entry
- ◆ occupational skills, knowledge and prior achievements not systematically assessed on entry
- ◆ initial assessment not used to prepare individual training plans
- ◆ support for trainees not fully documented

18. Prospective trainees are given detailed information at interview about the college, its facilities and the training programmes available. Staff are flexible in organising interviews, so that they take place during the day or the evening to suit trainees' personal circumstances. The additional learning needs of some trainees are not identified through the college's basic skills test. Standardised psychological tests and occupational analyses are not used. There is a comprehensive individual induction programme dealing with the college environment and the training programme. There is also a job-specific induction in the workplace. Trainees receive a well-presented induction pack containing useful information and advice. Trainees are helped both by employers and the training staff, who have a detailed knowledge of each person's circumstances and needs. Employers are not involved closely enough in planning trainees' programmes. Opportunities for work-based learning and assessment are missed. Tutors in all the occupational areas encourage trainees to discuss their progress. Each trainee is seen regularly, either at college or at work. Trainees who need professional counselling have access to the college counsellor and the chaplain.

19. Trainees who are recruited directly by their employers do not have their basic skills assessed when they join a training programme. Copies of individual training plans are held by college tutors and the contracts team, but they are neither updated regularly nor are they sufficiently standardised to give anyone a complete picture. Some individual training plans state that trainees are working towards qualifications which they have yet to start. Details of the additional support needed by trainees who are endorsed as having learning difficulties are not fully documented. Trainees' prior achievements, their occupational skills and knowledge are not taken into account in preparing individual training plans. Some trainees spend longer on their programmes than is necessary.

### Management of training

**Grade 3**

20. College management and staffing structures are clear. The position of work-based training in the college is less precisely defined. The training unit has overall responsibility for all work-based training, direct responsibility for the TEC contract and employers and responsibility for day-to-day faculties. There is a strong commitment among managers and staff to their own training and development. An appraisal system informs the staff training programme. TEC contracts are well managed. Several strengths in the self-assessment report could not be confirmed. Inspectors awarded a lower grade than that in the self-assessment report

#### *STRENGTHS*

- ◆ effective staff recruitment and development
- ◆ managers encourage open debate
- ◆ managers acknowledge the efforts of teams and individuals

#### *WEAKNESSES*

- ◆ lack of understanding of college strategies and targets by staff and subcontractors
- ◆ no clear responsibility for co-ordinating on- and off-the-job training
- ◆ lack of understanding of their rôles by staff
- ◆ insufficient use of data to inform management decisions
- ◆ some vocational tutors are unavailable during college holidays

21. Staff are recruited and interviewed using appropriate job and person specifications. Shortfalls in the experience of successful candidates are addressed through initial training and development plans. Further staff development needs are identified through the use of the annual appraisal system. The management arrangements for the contract team are clear and appropriate to its size. A friendly atmosphere encourages open debate. The efforts of staff are acknowledged.

22. The college has well documented aims and objectives, but they are not detailed when cascaded down to staff. Plans and targets are not set at the level of detail of trainees or occupations. College tutors provide off-the-job training. Their obligations are not formally agreed between teaching faculties and the contracts team. Control is difficult and there are unjustifiable variations in the quality of training. Staff are unsure of their obligations. Some data about training are collected, but too few. The college management information system, which was introduced in September 1997, does not provide the necessary information to assist staff in improving the training programmes. The unavailability of training at the college during the summer inhibits the flexibility of work-based training.

### Quality assurance

### Grade 3

23. The college meets the TEC's and the awarding bodies' requirements. There is a quality manual which gives a good introduction to its work. The manual is presented in a clear, easy-to-read style, but it does not give sufficient detail to inform staff fully about the working practices which are required of them. The college has a robust quality assurance system. A supervisory group, which includes three members of the senior management team, reviews the outcomes of the system and reports to the governors. Data about training provision are incomplete. Arrangements for collecting and analysing feedback from trainees and employers are inadequate. The self-assessment report did not identify all the weaknesses, and some of the strengths cited could not be confirmed. Inspectors awarded a lower grade than that proposed by the college.

#### *STRENGTHS*

- ◆ robust quality assurance system
- ◆ effective monitoring of off-the-job training

#### *WEAKNESSES*

- ◆ inadequate quality assurance arrangements for work-based activities
- ◆ quality assurance not fully understood by all staff and subcontractors

24. The contract team is committed to improving provision for training. Monitoring of trainees' achievement and destinations requires improvement. The college's quality assurance system is well established. It is effective for off-the-job training in the classroom, but does not extend to the majority of activity which takes place at work. There is little observation of training and no equivalent framework against which to set benchmarks for improvement. As a result of self-assessment, the college is now putting in place formal observations of on-the-job activities. However, this is too recent to determine its effectiveness.