



TRAINING STANDARDS COUNCIL

INSPECTION REPORT NOVEMBER 1998

REINSPECTION REPORT NOVEMBER 1999

# West Kent College

## SUMMARY

West Kent College offers training programmes in five occupational areas, taught by college faculty staff. Training in administration and in hair and beauty is good. That in engineering and hospitality is satisfactory, as are arrangements for equal opportunities and trainee support. Work placements are of good quality in each area. Procedures for the administration of training are comprehensive and well maintained. At the time of the first inspection, the training provided in health, care and public services, the management of training and quality assurance were all unsatisfactory. The links between the on- and off-the-job training were poorly managed. Quality assurance systems were inadequate. Assessment procedures and practices were poor in some occupational areas. There was no internal verification of some programmes. In most areas, retention of trainees was poor and achievement of qualifications very slow. West Kent College was reinspected 12 months after the original inspection. Changes to the training provided in health, care and public services addressed all the main weaknesses found in the original inspection and the training is now satisfactory. Most of the weaknesses in the management of training and in quality assurance have been addressed, but some new weaknesses have developed in the management of training.

**As a result of the reinspection of West Kent College, the original published report text for health, care and public services, management of training and quality assurance has been replaced by new text which makes reference to the original inspection findings. The 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 report that have not been subject to full reinspection have been left in their original form.**

### GRADES

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

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

REINSPECTION	GRADE
Health, care & public services	3

REINSPECTION	GRADE
Management of training	3
Quality assurance	3



### **KEY STRENGTHS**

- ◆ good-quality work placements
- ◆ good learning resources
- ◆ effective administrative support systems
- ◆ well planned off-the-job training
- ◆ highly informative course portfolios
- ◆ good levels of achievement in accountancy and adult training programmes
- ◆ systematic evaluation of quality of training

### **KEY WEAKNESSES**

- ◆ poor achievement and retention rates in most areas
- ◆ unclear roles and responsibilities for management of training
- ◆ incomplete quality assurance systems
- ◆ inadequate management information system
- ◆ insufficient analysis and use of data as a basis for planning

## INTRODUCTION

1. West Kent College is a medium-sized, general further education establishment, and is situated on one main site on the southern edge of Tonbridge. The college is one of the largest local employers, with 340 full-time equivalent staff, 230 of whom teach or support learning. The curriculum is delivered through three teaching faculties. The college has an enterprise division in which the training credits office is based. This office is responsible for all the administration connected with all training programmes and has one full-time and one part-time member of staff. Training programmes are taught and managed by staff in the three faculties. Each faculty has several advisory training boards. Regular meetings are held, and local employers and other interested parties are invited to discuss current trends in employment and other related issues in the local area. Most of the college's trainees are funded through a contract with the local training and enterprise council (TEC), The Learning and Business Link Company. Since the first inspection, the college has also entered a contract with Sussex Enterprise to train an additional 32 trainees. There are currently 155 trainees in construction, engineering, business administration, customer care, hospitality, hair and beauty, and health, care and public services, compared with the 153 who were in training at the time of the first inspection. Trainees are on work-based training programmes for adults and young people, including modern apprenticeships.

2. Trainees contact the college through one of two channels. Unemployed people contact the college and are invited to attend for interview, where they are advised on the most appropriate programme. Potential trainees are then informed of job vacancies and encouraged to contact employers directly to arrange interviews. If an interview does not result in employment, they are informed of other vacancies. If all the interviews are unsuccessful, trainees are referred again to the careers service. Employers also contact the college requesting that an employee be enrolled on a training course.

3. Mid and west Kent has a population of 459,000. Minority ethnic groups make up 2.5 per cent of the population in the county as a whole. Ninety per cent of local firms have fewer than 25 employees. While the economy of the area is relatively diversified, it has a concentration of some key sectors, which have very favourable long-term growth prospects. These include business and financial services, distribution, packaging, hotels, and print and publishing. West Kent has a strong base of local businesses, but there are skill shortages in some industries. In November 1998, the unemployment rate in Maidstone and the Weald was 2.5 per cent, while unemployment in Kent as a whole was at 4.3 per cent, and the national rate of unemployment was 5.2 per cent. By the time of the reinspection in November 1999, the equivalent percentages were 2.5 per cent, 4.3 per cent, and 5.2 per cent respectively. In Tonbridge, Tunbridge Wells and Sevenoaks, there are six grammar schools, eleven secondary schools, each with a sixth form, and three well-established adult education centres. In addition, there are two major public



schools and five other further education colleges within a 30-mile radius. The proportion of those aged 16 staying in full-time education in the west of the county is very high, at 83 per cent. Levels of educational attainment in Kent have been increasing steadily since 1994. In 1998, the proportion of school leavers achieving five or more general certificates of education (GCSEs) at grade C and above was 49.2 per cent compared with the national average of 46.3 per cent. In 1999, the proportion of school leavers achieving five or more general certificates of education (GCSEs) at grade C and above was 50.9 per cent compared with the national average of 47.9 per cent.

## INSPECTION FINDINGS

4. The college wrote an initial self-assessment report in March 1998, but, on receiving a copy of *Raising the Standard*, it was decided to rewrite the first draft. All staff involved in TEC-funded work were interviewed, and one person collated the self-assessment report from all their information. Relevant staff in each occupational area were asked to amend and comment on the draft report. When all comments had been collated and amendments made, a final version of the report was written. A second report was prepared for reinspection, which detailed the progress made towards meeting the targets of the action plan.

5. The original inspection was carried out by a team of six inspectors who spent a total of 18 days at West Kent College in November 1998. All occupational areas, except construction, which had only a few trainees, were inspected. Inspectors met and interviewed staff from the college, employers and trainees. They visited 26 employers' premises and interviewed 22 employers and 50 trainees. They also had 24 separate interviews with staff from the college. They observed 10 training sessions. Inspectors examined assessment records, training plans, trainees' files and portfolios and numerous documents about training and management.

6. Reinspection was carried out by a team of three inspectors who spent a total of nine days at West Kent College in November and December 1999. They interviewed 14 trainees, nine of whom were training in health, care and public services, while the other five were from other occupational areas. They also interviewed 26 college staff and 11 employers. They examined documents relating to training, quality assurance and management, and trainees' files, portfolios and assessment records.

Grades awarded to instruction sessions at original inspection

	GRADE 1	GRADE 2	GRADE 3	GRADE 4	GRADE 5	TOTAL
Business administration			3			3
Hospitality		1	1			2
Hair & beauty		2	3			5
<b>Total</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>10</b>

## OCCUPATIONAL AREAS

### Engineering

### Grade 3

7. West Kent College has 17 trainees in engineering. All the trainees are on traineeships. The qualifications offered are engineering manufacture national vocational qualification (NVQ) at level 2, vehicle mechanical NVQ level 2 and 3 and electronic servicing part 2. All trainees are employed and attend the college one day each week to follow the NVQ programme or a certificated course which contributes to their theory knowledge. Motor vehicle staff who are qualified as assessors and trainers carry out training in college and in the workplace. Work-based performance evidence is also supported by witness testimony. Achievement rates across the three areas are low, at 17 per cent for the period of 1995 to date. The proportion of those leaving their programmes before completion during 1995-98 is too high at 53 per cent. The motor vehicle and electronic courses take three to four years to complete. Some of the strengths identified in the self-assessment report are descriptions of normal practice, and inspectors found additional strengths and weaknesses. Inspectors awarded the same grade as that proposed by the college in its self-assessment report.

#### *STRENGTHS*

- ◆ well-planned off-the-job training
- ◆ high-quality work placements
- ◆ good workshop facilities with sound technical support
- ◆ motor-vehicle staff maintain good contact with local employers

#### *WEAKNESSES*

- ◆ inadequate integration of on- and off-the-job training
- ◆ work-based staff have little knowledge of NVQs
- ◆ assessment is not progressive
- ◆ poor achievement and retention
- ◆ no formal feedback from trainees on the effectiveness of their training

8. West Kent College has good workshops containing well-maintained equipment, supported by a plentiful supply of hand tools and well-stocked stores. The motor-vehicle section has a good range of vehicles to support learning and, through links with a local company, has been provided with three relatively new vehicles. The engineering department fosters links with local employers through its motor-vehicle and engineering advisory board. Representatives of local companies, the TEC and

other interested parties are invited to the college to discuss course content, progression and recent developments in the local area and the industry in general. The motor-vehicle section's staff keep in regular contact with local employers by telephone. In some companies, where trainees receive on-the-job training, these links are not always maintained at a satisfactory level. For example, work-based staff have little knowledge of NVQs, and there is insufficient integration of on- and off-the-job training.

9. Off-the-job training at the college is well planned, delivered and assessed by technically qualified staff, who also have training and assessment qualifications. Courses are highly developed, and course files contain schemes of work, session plans and course materials. Trainees are enthusiastic about their training experiences, both on and off the job. Work placements are of high quality. One placement has a dedicated quality assurance trainer who has responsibility for instructing trainees in quality-related techniques, such as statistical process control and the Kaizen quality assurance system. In the recent past, some assessment of motor-vehicle trainees has been carried out in the work place. More recently, some tutors' long-term sickness and lack of available tutor time have meant that assessment of the motor-vehicle NVQ takes place when evidence has been collected for all units, usually at the end of the programme, rather than progressively throughout the programme.

10. The college has an evaluation system for collecting information, from full-time students, about the effectiveness of training during their programme, but this is not applied to TEC-funded trainees. Achievement rates and retention rates in these departments are low.

### **Business administration**

### **Grade 2**

11. West Kent College has 43 trainees in business administration, of whom 17 are working towards the Association of Accounting Technician (AAT) qualifications, three at NVQ level 4, seven at NVQ level 3 and seven at NVQ level 2. There are three trainees working towards NVQ level 2 in business administration and two modern apprentices. The remaining 21 trainees are on a thirteen-week adult training programme, 11 working towards level NVQ 3 in business administration and 10 working towards NVQ level 2 in information technology. Trainees following the AAT programme join the regular evening classes held in the college. Adult trainees attend college four days a week and are on work placement for one day each week. The self-assessment report clearly identified many of the strengths and weaknesses of this provision. Inspectors awarded the same grade as that proposed by the college.

#### *STRENGTHS*

- ◆ well qualified tutors and assessors
- ◆ good work placements



- ◆ good learning resources
- ◆ high trainee achievements in AAT and training for work programmes

#### *WEAKNESSES*

- ◆ discontinuity of staff support in foundation AAT programme
- ◆ inconsistent integration of on- and off-the-job training
- ◆ missed opportunities for on-the-job assessment

12. There is a team of well-qualified tutors and assessors to deliver programmes. There are comprehensive schemes of work covering the underpinning knowledge of the qualification using interesting topics to engage trainees' interest. Recruitment to the AAT programme is buoyant this year. Trainees undergo a comprehensive and thorough induction. The quality of work placements is high. A well equipped information technology suite with 40 workstations is available to trainees at all times. The software available is of an appropriate industrial standard. Staff work hard to encourage trainees' development and offer additional support, either after the trainees have finished classes within the college, or by using an appointment system. Trainees are well motivated and confident. They are taught the underpinning knowledge for the qualification in a group context and, therefore, benefit from peer support. There is high achievement in both AAT and adult training programmes. Trainees' portfolios are generally good, but some opportunities for assessment in the workplace are missed. Assessment on the AAT programme is completed in the college, no time is built in for lecturers to go into the workplace to assess.

13. The learning rate of foundation-level AAT trainees is slow, owing to the disruption caused by the high turnover of staff. The integration of on- and off-the-job training varies between satisfactory and good and some AAT trainees have difficulty in relating some of the work covered in the off-the-job training to what they are doing on the job. Trainees are not given enough help to plan the collection of evidence for their NVQ portfolios or key skills, while they are working in their placements, and there is no assessment by direct observation in the workplace. Therefore, potential opportunities provided by work experience are not used effectively.

### **Hospitality**

### **Grade 3**

14. There are 23 trainees on hospitality programmes. The number this year is above that at the same time last year, although the trend over the last five years has been a decline in numbers. Fourteen work towards NVQ level 2 in food preparation and cookery, and the remaining nine are registered on modern apprenticeships following the 'chef apprentice' framework. All trainees are employed with individual employers and attend college for one day a week during college terms. The formal training and assessment are carried out off the job by the college. The

training is provided by full-time and part-time college staff who are all qualified assessors and have a substantial and appropriate range of commercial experience. Inspectors could not endorse several strengths and weaknesses in the self-assessment report, but identified additional strengths and weaknesses. Inspectors agreed with the grade proposed by the college in its self-assessment report.

#### *STRENGTHS*

- ◆ high-quality off-the-job training
- ◆ good tracking and monitoring of assessments
- ◆ key skills well integrated into the vocational work

#### *WEAKNESSES*

- ◆ lack of liaison between workplace supervisors and college training staff
- ◆ key skills not assessed during intermediate phase of modern apprenticeship
- ◆ poor retention and achievement

15. The schemes of work for the NVQ are collected in a course portfolio. They are well designed and ensure full coverage of all the elements of the qualification. Training is effective and motivates the trainees. There are tracking systems to enable monitoring of each trainee's progress towards the NVQ, and these are in the process of being updated to include key skills. A specialist tutor, with experience of the catering industry, is employed to assist the development of key skills training. Good learning materials, which draw links between trainees' workplace experience and key skills units, are being used with modern apprentices.

16. There is a regular programme of visits to trainees in their workplaces. These are carried out by a member of staff from the college's training credits office. Tutors from the faculty, with detailed vocational knowledge, do not take part in these visits. This severely limits their effectiveness in providing links between on- and off-the-job training. Workplace supervisors are not involved in the detailed planning of off-the-job training. In the national modern apprenticeship framework, key skills are intended to be integrated with vocational units throughout the programme. Trainees who started their training two years ago have had no training or assessment in key skills until this term. Thirty-one per cent of the 72 past trainees from these programmes achieved their NVQs; sixty-nine per cent did not complete their programmes, including 15 per cent who withdrew in the first term.

### **Hair and beauty**

### **Grade 2**

17. West Kent College is contracted to provide hairdressing training in Tonbridge and the surrounding areas of Kent and Sussex. The college provides one day's off-the-job training each week for 21 trainees working within 18 employers. It also has

six satellite centres, accommodated in local salons providing on- and off-the-job training and assessment for 19 trainees. The training programmes are NVQ levels 2 and 3 for national traineeships and other work based training for young people. All college staff are qualified assessors. The college provides assessor training for managers and assessors in the satellite centres. Several additional strengths and weaknesses were identified by the inspectors, who awarded the same grade as that proposed by the college in its self-assessment report.

#### *STRENGTHS*

- ◆ integrated key skills
- ◆ well-structured programmes
- ◆ effective internal verification system linked to assessor training
- ◆ good administrative links with employers

#### *WEAKNESSES*

- ◆ lack of integration of on- and off-the-job training
- ◆ poor retention rates

18. The off-the-job training is well organised at the college, with structured work schemes and back-up documentation. Units are presented in workbooks which are used at both the college and the satellite centres. Accreditation of prior learning is used to accelerate the assessment schedule for trainees. In the modern apprenticeship programme, the teaching of key skills is integrated into the occupational programme. Additional projects are given for some elements. For example, in an observed key skills session covering information technology, trainees experimented with different ways of presenting their course portfolios and became more familiar with NVQ units, as well as gaining practical skills. The working relationships between trainees and college staff are good, and staff offer a high level of support. Administration of the hairdressing programmes is efficiently carried out by the staff in the training credits office. The development of satellite centres, is a successful innovation, using local salons. The centres carry out most of the training under the supervision of the college. Several employers and work-based supervisors are trained or training as assessors. The salons have a high standard of accommodation, with modern equipment and resources. For those trainees who complete their programme, levels of achievement are good and further career development is encouraged. There is a predominance of female trainees, and staff are attempting to encourage more men to hairdressing by redeveloping marketing materials and by installing a new barbers salon.

19. Trainees are not clear about the content of their individual learning plans or details of the induction processes at the beginning of their programmes. On- and off-the-job training is not co-ordinated, and skills acquired at the college are not

systematically reinforced or developed in salons. Retention rates are poor, and, as is a fairly common experience in hairdressing, there is a high trainee turnover in some salons.

### **Health, care & public services**

### **Grade 3**

20. West Kent College offers training towards NVQs at levels 2 and 3 in care and early years care and education through modern apprenticeships, national traineeships and other programmes of work-based training for young people. All trainees are employed, and are assessed in the workplace. At the time of the original inspection, there were 30 trainees in this occupational area, 19 of whom were training in childcare, while the other 11 were training in care. There are now 12 care trainees working in 10 private residential care homes and 16 childcare trainees working in day nurseries, preschool nurseries, playgroups, primary schools and creches. Five of the care trainees are working towards NVQs at level 2, while the other seven are pursuing NVQs at level 3. The college provides three hours off-the-job training each week for childcare trainees. Trainees taking level 2 NVQs in care attend training sessions for three and three-quarter hours every week while those pursuing NVQs at level 3 have a three-hour session of off-the-job training every month. In addition, trainees taking NVQs at level 3 in care attend eight one-hour sessions for training in key skills. Most assessments are carried out by peripatetic assessors contracted by the college but, wherever possible, work-based assessors conduct assessments. Six work-based assessors are active in assessing childcare trainees, and one in assessing care trainees. The college provides training for work-based assessors and organises meetings to standardise assessment procedures. West Kent College is an accredited centre for care and childcare NVQs with two awarding bodies.

Inspectors at the first inspection identified the following main weaknesses:

- ◆ poor rate of programme completion
- ◆ lack of formal goal-setting for trainee achievement
- ◆ very low awareness of key skills among trainees
- ◆ no assessor allocated to some trainees
- ◆ insufficient input for childcare trainees

21. An action plan and the subsequent self-assessment report recommended measures that the college is taking to improve the quality of training and assessment. Inspectors awarded the same grade as that given in the self-assessment report.

### *STRENGTHS*

- ◆ thorough assessment practices
- ◆ well-organised off-the-job training
- ◆ high quality work placements

### *WEAKNESSES*

- ◆ low achievement rates of childcare NVQs
- ◆ late introduction of key skills

22. Care and childcare trainees work in a wide range of good quality placements, and take part in off-the-job training sessions in well-resourced training rooms. The college's learning resource centre is open to trainees for part of each training session. Assessors provide a high level of support to trainees by planning assessments with them and providing instructive feedback on progress. The standard of assessment is monitored carefully through the internal verification system. There are three internal verifiers in childcare and two in care. They observe assessments in the workplace, and maintain high and consistent standards of written work and practical performance by the assessors.

23. The main improvement to the quality of care training since the first inspection has been the introduction of a structured training programme for childcare. Schemes of work provide clear information about what will be taught, and trainees and workplace supervisors are given details of the training in advance of the sessions. Staff set clear goals for trainees. Trainees know the dates by which they are expected to achieve units of their NVQs, what they will be assessed on next, and when the assessment will take place. Trainees' progress is monitored and recorded effectively, through the quarterly review meetings carried out by administrative staff. If trainees fail to attend training sessions, their employers are notified immediately, and a record is kept on file. The internal verification system has been improved by the introduction of tracking forms to show how internal verification visits are planned and which assessments were monitored. All trainees are now allocated an assessor at the start of the programme.

24. Since the first inspection, the teaching and assessment of key skills have improved. Key skills are now assessed when trainees start their training, and trainees are informed early in their programmes of what will be assessed. Key skills classes are provided each week for childcare trainees, while those for care trainees are given in an eight-week block in the spring term. Opportunities for assessment of key skills within the occupational areas are clearly indicated. However, some of the care and childcare trainees who are pursuing level 3 NVQs, or those who have been on the programme longer, have a less secure understanding of how key skills relate to their occupational training. Prior learning has not always been taken into account in the assessment of key skills, although satisfactory arrangements are now made for assessment by an appropriately qualified member of staff. Key skills

assignments for some care trainees taking level 3 NVQs are sometimes only relevant to childcare trainees. Some trainees were not told about the key skills component of their training programmes until after they had completed their NVQs. This has slowed their progress, in that they have missed the opportunity for having their key skills assessed while they were being assessed for their NVQs.

25. The college's self-assessment report identified the poor achievement rates of childcare NVQs as a continuing weakness. Thirty-one per cent of TEC-funded trainees achieved a qualification in childcare between 1998 and 1999. Although considerable improvements have been made to the training programmes, there has not yet been any significant change in the achievement rates.

## GENERIC AREAS

### Equal opportunities

**Grade 3**

26. West Kent College has a comprehensive equal opportunities policy which was reviewed in February 1998. Both the training credits agreement document and the college diary given to all youth trainees contain an equal opportunities statement. An equal opportunities action-plan clearly lists points to be addressed, setting them against a stated timescale and a named person to carry out actions. Since the recent revision of the policy, there has been no possibility of monitoring over any length of time. Nevertheless, the action-plan states that there will be a review in December 1998. The self-assessment report clearly identified the strengths and weaknesses for this sector. Inspectors confirmed there was a balance of strengths and weaknesses and awarded the same grade as that proposed by the college.

#### *STRENGTHS*

- ◆ clearly written policy
- ◆ comprehensive action-plan
- ◆ good support for trainees with learning difficulties

#### *WEAKNESSES*

- ◆ lack of wheelchair access to all parts of the building
- ◆ no system to monitor employers' compliance with equal opportunities
- ◆ lack of awareness by trainees of equal opportunities issues

27. There is a clearly written equal opportunities policy, made available to all staff, which has not yet been through its first review process. There are, therefore, no monitoring statistics available to see whether it is effective. The action-plan covers

all aspects of equal opportunities and some action points, such as revising job descriptions to contain an equal opportunities statement, have been addressed. Good support is available to trainees with learning difficulties. When required, trainees are referred to other units in the college, such as the basic skills unit or to the specialist staff with knowledge of dyslexia. There is an awareness in one occupational area that there is a gender imbalance, and positive action is being taken to address this.

28. Marketing materials make no reference to equal opportunities, but staff job advertisements do contain a reference. Equal opportunities monitoring is part of the staff recruitment process. Other statistics, referring to gender, ethnicity and disability are recorded, but no analyses are carried out; therefore, information does not inform future planning. There has been limited equal opportunities training for staff. However, staff changes have meant that follow-up sessions have not been organised. Some areas of the college do not have wheelchair access, but, as part of the current refurbishment programme, a lift will be installed by spring 1999. There is no system to monitor employers' equal opportunities policies and practices, and the college does not press employers to produce appropriate policies, if they do not already have their own. Equal opportunities are also covered in trainees' induction, but most trainees have a poor awareness and understanding of equal opportunities issues.

### **Trainee support**

### **Grade 3**

29. West Kent College holds the Basic Skills Agency's quality mark which was re-awarded in June 1998. Information on the training programmes is available through leaflets and flyers issued by the college and also at the local careers office. The material is aimed at trainees and employers. The college holds regular open-days and information events for trainees and employers. Access to the training programmes is managed through the training credits office, whose staff offer advice and guidance to trainees and employers approaching the college.

30. Those applicants already in employment complete an application form, and the training credits office then arranges a visit to the trainees' workplace, where an assessment of their previous achievement and skills is carried out and support needs identified. Other prospective trainees will be invited to the college, where they are interviewed and tested. An individual training plan is drawn up. If a need for additional support is identified, trainees are referred to other departments in the college which provide support for basic skills, including numeracy, literacy and dyslexia. It is the trainee's choice whether he/she uses these additional services.

31. Trainees are inducted to their programme during their first college session by the course tutor. The training credits office also issues a pack of information, including trainees' individual training plans and training credits agreements. The training credits office carries out an initial review of all trainees in the first four weeks of the programme and holds subsequent reviews in the workplace every three months, where overall progress is reviewed. The college provides a student

charter and also has finance and welfare support and careers advice available for trainees. Programme tutors and college- and work-based assessors provide feedback on progress, including a progress report at the end of each term. The self-assessment report was accurate in its assessment, and inspectors awarded the same grade as that proposed by the college.

### *STRENGTHS*

- ◆ good support for trainees with diverse needs
- ◆ regular pastoral visits
- ◆ trainee records fully documented and reviewed

### *WEAKNESSES*

- ◆ application of accreditation of prior learning/achievement is not consistent
- ◆ ineffective initial induction to programmes
- ◆ trainees have limited knowledge of rights and responsibilities

32. Good support is available for all trainees with additional learning needs. The support includes help for trainees who have English as a second language to help them to understand the language of NVQ awards. It also includes making resources available to trainees with dyslexia and giving support to trainees with learning disabilities who are integrated in the workplace. This support helps trainees' personal development and achievement.

33. The three-monthly visits by the training credits office to monitor progress and address any support needs are effective in motivating trainees and showing the college's commitment to supporting trainees. They also enables trainees to access support and facilities which may otherwise remain remote to them. For most trainees, the training credits office is the first point of contact for queries or problems. All records kept in the training credits office are thorough, regularly updated and include copies of progress and review.

34. The college has an accreditation of prior learning policy. All trainees have their prior achievement and learning assessed, by staff from the training credits office, at their initial visit. However, there is varying use of accreditation of prior learning in NVQ programmes, some areas taking full account of a trainees' prior learning and achievement, while, in other areas, trainees repeat work which could have been accredited by prior achievement.

35. Trainees receive a range of induction material, covering all aspects of their programme, which is ineffectively understood and not retained by trainees, resulting, in many cases, in a lack of awareness of the initial training plan, the college students' charter, college equal opportunities policy and access to counselling services. Where induction to the NVQ programmes has not been effective,



trainees' progress has been hampered by lack of understanding of the requirements of their award, the further effect of this is that trainees are unaware of their right to appeal against assessment decisions or how to complain.

### **Management of training**

### **Grade 3**

36. Since 1993, the college has undergone three significant changes in its management structure. The administration of all TEC-funded training and liaison with The Learning and Business Link Company and Sussex Enterprise continue to be managed by the enterprise department, but issues arising from the post-inspection action plan are monitored by the operations department. Within the enterprise department, the administration of TEC-funded training is the responsibility of the training credits office. Responsibility for overseeing the implementation of the action plan lies with a small project group led by the operations manager and including the vocational co-ordinator and the training credits officer. This group met with the heads of faculty and other senior managers in order to agree the action plan. Occupational training programmes are the responsibility of vocational teams in each of the college's three faculties.

The main weaknesses identified by the first inspection were:

- ◆ managers in occupational areas do not take responsibility for on-the-job training
- ◆ no communication among separate training teams
- ◆ employers are not usually involved in the planning or evaluation of training
- ◆ lack of continuity in management of training
- ◆ lack of up to date comprehensive data
- ◆ no links between on- and off-the-job training

37. There is a staff development budget, but training is not linked to the strategic plan. Time is allocated each week for staff to hold meetings. In its self-assessment report, the college failed to identify two additional weaknesses in this aspect of its work. Inspectors awarded the same grade as that given in the self-assessment report.

#### *STRENGTHS*

- ◆ effective and comprehensive administrative systems
- ◆ frequent review and updating of key documents and procedures
- ◆ highly informative course portfolios

#### *WEAKNESSES*

- ◆ unclear roles and responsibilities for management of training

- ◆ inadequate management information system
- ◆ insufficient liaison with employers

38. The training credits office is very efficient in its administration of the TEC-funded training. It maintains the record systems required by the TEC and monitors the progress of every trainee. Staff keep in regular contact with both employers and trainees. They also run a highly reliable system for monitoring trainees' absences which collates information from employers, trainers and trainees. Documents are systematically reviewed and updated. The equal opportunities policy, the disability statement, and the health and safety policy and procedures have all been reviewed and updated since the original inspection.

39. There is a 'course portfolio' for each training programme. These are highly informative and contain detailed current information on each course and full schemes of work for each programme of study. Staff use the portfolios to inform tutors about the context of the training which they are providing, and to facilitate regular reviews of the training provided by the college.

40. Managers in occupational areas now take responsibility for on-the-job training. In most occupational areas, college staff now make regular visits to trainees' workplaces. They also send monitoring and review sheets to employers and trainees six times a year. These ask employers and trainees to identify what the trainees have learnt on the job. In some occupational areas trainees keep diaries of their workplace activities which they then evaluate. In addition, schemes of work for off-the-job training are routinely sent to employers, along with an information sheet on the trainees' programmes. These initiatives have helped to improve the co-ordination of on- and off-the-job training. Employers are now regularly involved in planning and evaluating the training through occupational advisory board meetings, monitoring and review, and end-of-programme evaluation sheets.

41. The lack of continuity in the management of training identified during the first inspection has been partly rectified, although a further reorganisation is now taking place within the enterprise department. Transitional arrangements to cover this period of change are planned and do not affect the trainees' experience directly. However, there is lack of clarity as to who has overall responsibility for the management of TEC-funded training at a senior management level.

42. A new management information system has been installed since the last inspection. It cannot, as yet, however, record employers' details or report retention, achievement and destination data for TEC-funded trainees separately from information for students who are funded by the Further Education Funding Council (FEFC). Information specifically on TEC-funded trainees is held in a separate record system based in the training credits office. This information is not accessible to faculty staff, however.

43. Although much progress has been made in getting employers involved in the planning and evaluation of training programmes, they are still not sufficiently involved in these activities in some occupational areas. Important gaps still remain in the communication between the college and trainees' workplaces. Employers do not have copies of trainees' review sheets. There is little response to feedback questionnaires in some occupational areas, and much of the information which has been gained remains uncollated. Occupational advisory boards are not yet operational in all occupational areas.

### Quality assurance

### Grade 3

44. The colleges' quality assurance arrangements meet awarding body and local TEC requirements. Since the first inspection, staff have worked to improve the quality assurance systems. They have introduced a new quality assurance document called 'the quality wheel guide'. The college's post-inspection action plan identified the actions needed to monitor and improve the quality of all its TEC-funded training programmes. The plan has been put into effect and some of the actions taken have already started to have an impact on the quality of training. Some developments are at an early stage, however, and it is therefore too soon to judge their effectiveness.

The main weaknesses identified by the first inspection were:

- ◆ the quality system is not fully embedded
- ◆ targets are not set
- ◆ monitoring of achievements and destinations of trainees is not systematic and does not inform decision making
- ◆ internal verification practice is variable
- ◆ modern apprenticeships not following the national framework in one area

45. The quality assurance system and the self-assessment mechanisms are due to be internally audited in the near future. Inspectors awarded the same grade as that given in the self-assessment report.

#### *STRENGTHS*

- ◆ trainee-centred quality assurance system
- ◆ systematic evaluation of quality of training

#### *WEAKNESSES*

- ◆ quality system not fully implemented
- ◆ data does not always inform decision making

46. The college now has a written quality assurance system called 'the quality wheel', of which the central focus is the trainee. All departments have contributed to 'the quality wheel guide'. This is made up of a set of standards covering all aspects of the training process, from initial enquiries, through training and assessment, to leaving the programme. The guide also identifies who is responsible for ensuring the various standards are met. Some aspects of the quality assurance system are not yet fully implemented. A 'quality handbook', which is a summary of the quality assurance processes, supports the quality wheel guide, but is currently still only a draft document. The quality assurance policy for the staff appraisal system is also still at a draft stage.

47. Data are collected systematically and presented effectively. Data are collected from employers by means of a questionnaire and a combined trainees and employers' progress report, which covers both on-, and off-the-job training. The training credits office collects data on the achievements and destinations of trainees leaving training, but there is little analysis of this information, and the planning process does not make systematic use of it.

48. The college systematically evaluates the quality of training. This begins with the completion of the course logbook, which also identifies targets for retention and achievement levels. Targets are set by reference to FEFC statistical data. Retention and achievement data are shown for a three-year period. Logbooks are completed by the course leader and verified by the curriculum leader or the curriculum and quality development co-ordinator. This monitoring activity is carried out each term. The course leader identifies and records the strengths and weaknesses of the course and initiates an action plan to address any weak areas. Action plans identify responsibilities, targets, milestones and completion dates. If the issue is one of staff development, then this is identified in the action plan. Seven course meetings are held each year and recorded in the logbook. The record for team meeting number seven eventually also identifies how achievement levels compare with the targets that were set, when that information becomes available. The logbook also records feedback from trainees, parents and employers. Logbooks provide a foundation for the self-assessment reports generated by curriculum leaders, which in turn are incorporated into the college self-assessment report. Currently, it would be difficult to extract information on TEC-funded training programmes from the colleges' self-assessment report. The college has recognised this and intends to address this issue in the near future.

49. At the time of the original inspection, internal verification practice was not consistent across all occupational areas. The college has addressed this problem and in June 1999 appointed a member of staff to be responsible for internal verification across the whole college. The appointee has formed an 'NVQ steering group' to guide the conduct of NVQ assessment and convenes regular meetings with internal verifiers to discuss verification issues and share good practice. These meetings have led to the production of a checklist for internal verifiers, use of which



has contributed to standardisation of internal verification practice. There is also now a system for auditing internal verification practice and internal verifiers are given written feedback on their performance. Although the full impact of these changes has yet to be felt, internal verification is now satisfactory.

50. The self-assessment report prepared prior to reinspection gave an accurate account of the progress made towards addressing the weaknesses by the original inspection. Inspectors agreed with the grades given to each area to be reinspected.