



TRAINING STANDARDS COUNCIL

INSPECTION REPORT NOVEMBER 1999

Kwik-Fit (GB) Limited

SUMMARY

Kwik-Fit (GB) Limited carries out satisfactory training in motor vehicle engineering, which is rigorously assessed in the workplace with good evidence provided for the national vocational qualification (NVQ) at level 2. Trainees are afforded equality of opportunity within the organisation, and there are good procedures established to protect staff. Trainees enjoy good support during their training, and complete additional courses to build their confidence and encourage teamwork. The training has been poorly managed, although recent staff changes in the company have resulted in substantial improvements. The quality of training is assured through a regular auditing process, but new auditing procedures are not yet fully established and tested.

GRADES

OCCUPATIONAL AREAS	GRADE
Engineering	3

GENERIC AREAS	GRADE
Equal opportunities	3
Trainee support	2
Management of training	4
Quality assurance	3

KEY STRENGTHS

- ◆ well-written, comprehensive training programme
- ◆ rigorous workplace assessment practices
- ◆ comprehensive equal opportunities
- ◆ telephone helplines provided to support trainees
- ◆ good personal development programme for trainees
- ◆ well-planned and integrated on- and off-the-job training and assessment
- ◆ effective action taken to address weaknesses identified through self-assessment

KEY WEAKNESSES

- ◆ no use of individual training plans as working documents
- ◆ no routine monitoring of equal opportunities
- ◆ no initial assessment of basic or key skills
- ◆ no integration of key skills with the vocational programme
- ◆ no service level agreements with subcontractors
- ◆ underdeveloped internal verification process

INTRODUCTION

1. Kwik-Fit (GB) Limited is a wholly owned subsidiary of Kwik-Fit Holdings plc, and is the largest fast-fit organisation in the UK, with centres in England, Scotland and Wales employing 5,000 people. The managing director of Kwik-Fit (GB) Limited reports to the main board of Kwik-Fit Holdings plc.
2. The company specialises in fitting and servicing a restricted range of mechanical and electrical components for motor vehicles, including tyres, exhausts, batteries, brakes, shock-absorbers, suspension and lubrication. The company subcontracts the development of off-the-job training materials to one of Kwik-Fit Holding's companies, which specialises in training. All off-the-job training is provided by Kwik-Fit's internal trainers at its six divisional training centres. It also subcontracts with the Prince's Trust Volunteers (PTV) to provide a personal skills development programme.
3. Kwik-Fit was established in 1971, with subsidiary businesses in Northern Ireland, Eire, the Netherlands, Belgium, Germany, France and Spain. Kwik-Fit also has a number of other businesses in the UK: Kwik-Fit Insurance, Kwik-Fit Fleet, Tyre Sales, Apples Car Clinics, Training for Advancement, and Preston Paints.
4. Kwik-Fit (GB) Ltd has 82 trainees working towards an NVQ at level 2 in vehicle maintenance, entitled 'service replacement', at its centres across England. Trainees are funded by training and enterprise councils (TECs) through a contract with the National Training Partnership (NTP). Tyneside TEC is the co-ordinating TEC for the purpose of liaising with the TECs about the inspection and the subsequent action-planning process.

INSPECTION FINDINGS

5. Kwik-Fit (GB) Ltd conducted its first self-assessment in March 1999. The process involved trainees and members of staff who answered a questionnaire about the company's training processes. The information was collated and analysed, and the results were used to form the basis of the self-assessment report, which was mainly written by the company's training and development co-ordinator. The training and development co-ordinator attended an overview on the inspection process organised by the Training Standards Council in December 1998, and held a meeting with staff to pass on the information gained. When the self-assessment report was completed, the training and development co-ordinator discussed its content with other managers, who agreed with the general findings. The self-assessment report identifies strengths and weaknesses, some of which inspectors agreed with. Additional strengths and weaknesses were identified in all areas.

6. A team of six inspectors spent a total of 24 days inspecting Kwik-Fit during November 1999. Members of the inspection team were located in the southwest, southeast, northwest and northeast of England for part of the time, and all spent some time at one of the company's offices in Hanley, Stoke-on-Trent. Inspectors examined training being conducted in the vehicle maintenance, service replacement programme, aimed at the company's younger trainees working in Kwik-Fit centres around the country. They also examined management files, trainees' achievement data and trainees' personal files and portfolios. Interviews were conducted with trainees, supervisors, managers, tutors/assessors and subcontractors. In total, 55 trainees were interviewed. Inspectors visited two off-the-job training subcontractors and 36 work placements, and interviewed 29 employers' representatives. They also observed five assessments, five training sessions (four of which were graded, three at grade 2 and one at grade 3) and four reviews of trainees' progress.

OCCUPATIONAL AREAS

Engineering (motor vehicle)

Grade 3

7. Kwik-Fit provides training in motor vehicle engineering in the company's six national divisional areas of eastern, western London, Scotland, southeast and southwest. The Scottish division was not included in this inspection. The company delivers its own training and assessment programme for NVQ level 2 motor vehicle maintenance, service replacement, in the six divisions. The knowledge element is supported by a dedicated multiple-choice and practical skills test, which is jointly certificated by a national awarding body and Kwik-Fit. There are 82 trainees, of whom 43 are on national traineeships and 39 are on other training programmes for young people; all the trainees are employed status. The company offers an apprenticeship training programme for 16 to 18 year olds, with good career-path

opportunities. All trainees receive a two-day company induction programme at one of the divisional training centres. The induction programme is followed immediately by the first dedicated training module of tyre-fitting before trainees start work in their allocated Kwik-Fit retail outlet centre. There are eight training modules, each completed on a 13-week cycle; trainees receive initial training followed by work experience, with at least two work-based assessments per module by staff of the retail outlet centre. At the end of the period, a final NVQ assessment takes place, carried out by experienced and qualified trainers/assessors. All trainees follow Kwik-Fit's structured apprenticeship programme, which is based on the company's comprehensive 'work instruction' manual. There were no NVQ achievements for 1996 to 1999, although there have been significant improvements in the current contract year, with 14 NVQs achieved since August 1999. The number of trainees leaving the programme early has also shown improvement, with a rate of 76, 24 and 26 per cent of leavers respectively over the last three contract years. In this current contract year, there have been 17 early leavers, 10 of whom obtained employment with Kwik-Fit. Inspectors regarded some of the strengths and weaknesses identified in the self-assessment report as either contractual compliance or no more than normal practice. They identified additional strengths and weaknesses, and awarded a grade which was one higher than that given by the company.

STRENGTHS

- ◆ well-documented, comprehensive training programme
- ◆ rigorous workplace assessment
- ◆ good off-the-job training resources
- ◆ all trainees employed, with positive career paths

WEAKNESSES

- ◆ no use of individual training plans as working documents
- ◆ no accreditation of prior learning
- ◆ narrow range of assessment opportunities offered in some retail outlets
- ◆ late assessment for some trainees

8. Kwik-Fit found the service replacement NVQ difficult to assess in their centres mainly because they believed the evidence requested to meet the standards did not reflect modern vehicle techniques. Assessors were unable to assess trainees' evidence against appropriate NVQ standards. This difficulty resulted in slow progress for trainees and the awarding body took a rigid approach to the evidence requirements. In an attempt to resolve the problem, Kwik-Fit contacted another awarding body which agreed to work with the organisation to see where acceptable NVQ evidence could be gained within its retail repair centres. The result of the comprehensive commitment from both organisations to resolve the problem has been a fully agreed evidence-collection route, which leads to sufficient valid work

evidence to enable trainees to complete the NVQ. Trainees can now have their evidence assessed, internally verified and can finally complete their NVQ. This has resulted in recent achievements for third-year trainees. But because so much of the evidence previously gathered could not be cross-referenced to meet the requirements of the new awarding body, it was deemed quicker for trainees to repeat the whole set of assessments. Trainees now have comprehensive evidence-gathering documents, which meet the awarding body's criteria. This documentation is still in its infancy, and has not been fully evaluated. Trainees' portfolios are held within the training centre or divisional offices, which limits trainees' access to them and they are not clear where the evidence fits into the NVQ programme. Currently, trainees hold evidence for each module they are working towards, which tutors place in their portfolio ready for final assessment and internal verification.

9. The initial skill selection test used at recruitment is basic; it involves comprehension and mechanical aptitude tests. The information from the tests is not used to meet individuals' training needs. Individual training plans are not personalised to trainees, and do not take account of their specific learning needs. Individual training plans are not used at the time of trainees' reviews, nor to monitor progression or achievement of targets for the NVQ programme. There is no integration of key skills within the national traineeship programme. Three of the key skills are provided during trainees' time on the personal development programme run by the Prince's Volunteer Trust, but they are not subsequently integrated into the vocational programme. The requirement to integrate key skills only applies to trainees who started in 1999. The remaining key skills are not yet being assessed. Trainees' previous learning experiences are not taken into account at the start of their apprenticeship programme. Currently, there is no qualified prior-learning advisor within the company. Those trainees who may have learning-support needs are often missed because of the lack of a rigorous initial assessment. There is no company-wide strategy to meet individual trainees' learning needs. A new individual training plan, which builds in methods of assessment, is being used to address this issue, but it is too soon to evaluate the benefits to trainees. Some retail centres offer a narrow range of fast-fit services and trainees placed in these outlets do not, therefore, gain sufficient work experience to achieve competence for some modules. Trainees in these outlets are temporarily moved to a different outlet to gain the necessary experience and evidence of their competence so that they can be assessed. The company has identified this weakness, and has designed an assessment plan in an attempt to eradicate the problem.

10. All trainees have a planned programme which is explained to them at the start of the apprenticeship training induction. The divisional training centres provide knowledge and practical training sessions, which vary in length from two to five days, at the start of each of the eight modules. The training is well planned, taught and integrated into the workshop exercises by very enthusiastic tutors. Trainees receive comprehensive training notes, which support the learning process. Training programmes are well written and graphically illustrated in a way which is easy to understand. The programme given to trainees at their induction is a coloured chart which clearly indicates planned on- and off-the-job training and assessments over a

two-year period. Trainees feel that their courses are relevant and well structured, and they use the training documents on a daily basis. Trainers have a good rapport with trainees, adding to their interest and enthusiasm. Technical training sessions are usually carried out with small groups of six to eight trainees. This group size reflects the low ratio of trainer to trainees throughout the company. The training centres are well equipped with a range of braking and suspension test rigs. For health and safety compliance, each trainee independently audits all equipment prior to use. This practice reinforces trainees' learning and attitude to the fast-fit industry. All assessments are carried out in the workplace, using the retail outlet's facilities. In most cases, customers' vehicles are used, with their permission, for NVQ assessment. Either the retail centre manager or a 'partner' (the district manager), who act as expert witnesses, carry out at least two intermediate assessments, which are conducted to the company's own high standards. Most district managers are trained as company assessors. They act as peripatetic assessors providing witness testimony only of trainees' competence, visiting trainees in the workplace. Final assessments are carried out to the NVQ criteria during the last stages of the 13-week training cycle. The assessment process is rigorous and well recorded. All apprentices are employed for the duration of the training programme. Trainees are initially employed as Kwik-Fit apprentices, they then start the NVQ programme. In the third year, they complete their NVQ and are employed as advanced fitters, and in the fourth year they become master fitters. It is the company's policy to promote from within, with many trainees progressing to managerial positions in the retail centres. This means that trainees have expert advice available to them about their training, from managers who have themselves been trainees. Trainees are initially supplied with a comprehensive toolkit, towards which they make a small contribution each week. On completion of their apprenticeship programme and successful achievement of the NVQ, the contribution is reimbursed as an incentive bonus, along with the tools.

GENERIC AREAS

Equal opportunities

Grade 3

11. Kwik-Fit's equal opportunities policy is comprehensive and current. The policy is updated regularly, and is widely distributed to trainees, staff and all its repair centres. Trainees are informed of the company's commitment to equal opportunities during their induction. Kwik-fit is involved in outreach initiatives within local communities, and encourages disadvantaged groups to take part in supervised programmes related to vehicles and their repair. Managers are responsible for promoting equality of opportunity throughout the company, and the profile is being raised through advertising and marketing initiatives. The proportion of trainees from minority ethnic groups on Kwik-Fit's apprenticeship programme is currently 2 per cent. There are two female trainees on the programme, and two trainees who are registered as disabled. Inspectors regarded all the strengths identified in the self-assessment report as amounting to just one strength, and identified two others. They

also identified two additional weaknesses to those in the self-assessment report. Inspectors agreed with the grade given in the report.

STRENGTHS

- ◆ comprehensive equal opportunities policy
- ◆ good practice in recruitment
- ◆ good promotion of equal opportunities through strong community links

WEAKNESSES

- ◆ no central complaints system
- ◆ not all marketing literature displays equal opportunities statement
- ◆ no routine monitoring of equal opportunities in the workplace

GOOD PRACTICE

Kwik-Fit staff have been working with young offenders within detention centres. Individuals are promised a job interview with Kwik-Fit on release. Two ex-offenders are now employed in Kwik-Fit centres as a result of this initiative.

12. Kwik-Fit has a comprehensive policy to support the promotion of equal opportunities. The equal opportunities policy is supported by a policy statement and an implementation procedure. The policy statement is very detailed, giving examples of various types of discrimination in order to aid trainees and staff's understanding of the wider implications of equal opportunities. The equal opportunities policy identifies the individual's right to complain on issues of equality, and explains the procedure. The policy was initially developed in consultation with the Equal Opportunities Commission, and follows the commission's recommendations. The policy is updated regularly, keeping abreast of legislative developments. Staff have recently attended external workshops on employment legislation, which covered the relevant acts affecting equality of opportunity. Kwik-Fit also operates a harassment care policy for staff and trainees, which identifies examples of various forms of harassment and bullying. Within the policy, there is a detailed procedure for individuals to follow in the event of a problem. The care policies for staff and trainees include a disciplinary and grievance procedure, with detailed information on its application. To monitor the disciplinary process, the divisional training and development manager regularly attends disciplinary hearings as an observer. In cases where harassment is an issue, and English is not the first language of some of the parties involved, interpreters are brought in to ensure that individuals are able to present their case coherently. Access to interpreters is through Kwik-Fit's local links with minority ethnic groups. Equal opportunity forms part of Kwik-Fit's recruitment procedures for both staff and trainees to ensure that best practice is adopted. Trainees and staff sign to confirm that equality of opportunity has been covered during their induction, and that it has been understood.

13. Monitoring of equal opportunities takes place at the time of recruitment, for both trainees and staff. Information is gathered through an equal opportunities section on the initial application form. The information is collated and analysed, and is then used to target under-represented groups for future recruitment exercises. Those targeted include women and minority ethnic groups. As part of a regional

trainee-satisfaction questionnaire, trainees' views were sought on how Kwik-Fit performs in ensuring equality of opportunity for everyone. All of the responses were positive. There are examples of female trainees who have progressed through what is traditionally a male-dominated occupation, from trainee to fitter and on to centre-management roles. The retail centres have local arrangements with careers services to provide work-experience visits and talks to local schools, with particular emphasis on ethnic groups and women. Kwik-Fit's staff work with girls in schools, giving mechanical appreciation training to encourage consideration of a career within the company's practical workshops.

14. Kwik-Fit is committed to community initiatives, and works with juveniles who have been convicted of car-related crime. This provides the young ex-offenders with an appreciation of vehicles, and helps them to gain an understanding of motor vehicle technology. Staff also work with juveniles inside young-offender institutions. As part of Kwik-Fit's involvement with the Prince's Trust Volunteers (PTV), some of the disadvantaged youngsters who attend PYT development programmes are required to complete a four-week work placement, which is often provided in Kwik-Fit centres. These youngsters experience a range of difficulties, including drug and alcohol abuse, homelessness and offending behaviour. Current advertisements for staff and trainees portray positive role-model images of women and minority ethnic trainees in the company's marketing materials. Not all recruitment, marketing and company documents, however, carry the message that Kwik-Fit is an equal opportunities employer. The latest recruitment initiative is computerised, and collates equal opportunities information automatically. This allows trends to be identified rapidly, and targeting of under-represented people to be addressed accurately.

15. There is no central system for recording and storing complaints by staff and trainees. Although complaints are dealt with promptly and recorded locally, there is no central file to allow for checking the progress of complaints, or analysis of trends. There is currently no routine monitoring of equal opportunities issues at trainees' progress reviews. Trainees lack awareness of equal opportunities, and there is no facility on the progress review form to raise the profile and reinforce the ongoing understanding of equal opportunities for trainees and retail centre staff. The equal opportunities policy is not displayed in all centres.

Trainee support

Grade 2

16. Local employment agencies and the careers service advertise any vacancies for trainees at Kwik-Fit centres. Information about Kwik-Fit's commitment to training, qualifications to be gained, and career opportunities within the company is presented in a leaflet produced for prospective Kwik-Fit apprentices. The recruitment procedure, following the completion of an application form, includes written and practical assessment tests followed by an interview. Successful candidates start with a comprehensive one-week induction, which includes basic training at one of Kwik-Fit's own training centres. This is followed by a short

induction at trainees' place of work. The training centres' technical trainers make regular visits to trainees' workplaces to ensure good progress and support for trainees to achieve their NVQ. The company works with local careers offices and schools, and often has referrals for trainees through former apprentices and current employees. Inspectors identified additional strengths and weaknesses to those detailed in the self-assessment report. The self-assessment report is self-critical of the training, development plans and reviews, although many of the weaknesses have been rectified. Additional strengths identified related particularly to extra incentives, external and internal support, and additional vocational qualifications. Additional weaknesses identified during inspection were in initial assessment and the levels of supervisors' knowledge of the NVQ structure. Inspectors awarded a grade higher than that given in the self-assessment report.

STRENGTHS

- ◆ comprehensive, residential induction programme
- ◆ good personal development programme benefits trainees
- ◆ telephone helplines to support trainees
- ◆ additional occupational qualifications
- ◆ incentives offered to encourage trainees' achievements

WEAKNESSES

- ◆ no initial assessment of basic or key skills
- ◆ infrequent and inadequate reviews in some centres
- ◆ lack of understanding of NVQs by workplace supervisors

17. New recruits to Kwik-Fit's training programmes undertake a comprehensive five-day residential induction programme which includes all the necessary information new employees need, along with details of the training programmes. Basic training in health and safety is also covered to prepare trainees before joining their allocated workplace. During the induction, and at any subsequent training periods at Kwik-Fit's training centres, trainees stay in a hotel with the trainers, who are there to provide support and encouragement for trainees. This helps to develop strong working relationships between trainees and trainers.

18. Kwik-Fit has strong links with the Prince's Trust Volunteers, and as part of their apprenticeship programme all trainees attend a 20-day personal development programme at the Trust. This programme develops trainees' confidence, motivation and skills through teamwork in the community, and also provides evidence for the key skills of working with others, improving own learning and communication. On successful completion of the programme, trainees receive a nationally recognised qualification for skills development, which is accepted for NVQ key skills units.

19. All Kwik-Fit's employees and their immediate family have access to an independent employee-support service, which is available 24 hours a day, 365 days a year. The service provides a telephone hotline for personal counselling, legal advice and financial guidance. Trainees are also given mobile telephone numbers for their technical trainers, in case they experience any difficulties or require help or advice with any aspect of their training programme.

20. As well as working towards their NVQ, trainees study for additional occupational qualifications. Part 1 of the nationally certificated automotive parts-fitting skills qualification is taken at the end of the first year of training, and part 2 the following year. Achieving additional professional certificates as the programme progresses helps to motivate trainees.

21. Trainees are given incentives to achieve their NVQ. For example, the company offers a bonus on successful completion of the NVQ at level 2. There is an added incentive for apprentices completing their second year of training. Each of the six divisional directors selects the best trainee in their division. The prize is to join the Paul Stewart racing team for a week and to work alongside the Formula 3 racing team. There is an additional incentive for the best of the six trainees, working for a further week alongside the world-famous Stewart grand prix team.

22. Initial assessment is used solely as a recruitment tool, rather than as a means of planning training or identifying areas of accredited prior learning. The principle part of initial assessment is spent on assembling a shock absorber, wiring a plug, some simple mathematics and completing a written comprehension test. These exercises provide an indicator of employment suitability, when used in conjunction with applicants' examination results and records of achievement. The opportunity is missed, however, to investigate trainees' strengths and weaknesses, with a view to modifying individual training plans, or to arrange additional training, for example, in literacy, numeracy or other identified areas.

23. In the retail centres, trainees have individual training plans with timescales linked to targets. These are monitored within centres and managers are updated on what trainees have received and witness testimony of their competence is provided by peripatetic assessors. The organisation, consequently, places less reliance on the formal review process. Most trainees and employees are pleased with the reviews and support they receive. However, although reviews are regular and frequent, they are often not recorded in sufficient depth or detail to enable them to be used as a planning tool. The design of the review form, which uses predefined boxes, does not encourage its use for detailed planning of training in the workplace, and does not focus on the collection of NVQ evidence. In some areas of the country, reviews are infrequent and do not contain targets or milestones for trainees to aim for. Supervisors are involved in reviews and sign the forms, but often leave the planning of training and future progress to the technical trainers and trainees. The company is aware that at manager and district manager level, extra training is needed to increase their awareness of NVQs; plans are in place to address these needs.

24. Some workplace supervisors lack sufficient knowledge of the NVQ requirements. This has an impact on their ability to effectively plan workplace training and affects the level of support they can offer trainees. Some trainees progress at a slower rate. In some cases, primarily in the earlier part of the programme, the full range of learning activities is not always available in the retail outlet centres where trainees have been placed. Trainees may need to be moved to centres with a wider range of activities. Trainees in this situation have to collect evidence for a range of activities that they may not previously have practised. This has resulted in delays in portfolio-building, which has in turn led to delayed final certification.

Management of training

Grade 4

25. Kwik-Fit's training and development department has a total of 26 staff. The training and development co-ordinator reports to the central support training and development manager. The company's national operation is divided into six divisions, with a training and development manager in each. There are 20 technical trainers across the divisions, reporting to the divisional training and development managers. The management structure is clear, and is understood by all staff. Kwik-Fit has been recognised as an Investor in People since 1993, and recently had its second reassessment, which will last for a further three years. The company has a current business plan, which is reviewed and updated regularly. There is a comprehensive staff development policy and an annual staff appraisal system. Staff turnover within the training and development department is 15 per cent in the current year. There are effective management-information systems to check and record trainees' progress. Kwik-Fit uses two subcontractors to assist in providing the training. The self-assessment report identified no strengths in this area. Inspectors identified three strengths, and additional weaknesses to those indicated in the self-assessment report. The improvements made since the production of the self-assessment report have resulted in the strengths identified by inspectors, and some of the weaknesses have been addressed. Inspectors awarded a higher grade than that given in the self-assessment report.

STRENGTHS

- ◆ good development programme for technical trainers
- ◆ well-planned and -integrated on- and off-the-job training and assessment
- ◆ effective links with NVQ standards-setting body

WEAKNESSES

- ◆ little evaluation of staff training
- ◆ no integration of key skills into training programme
- ◆ no service level agreements for subcontractors

- ◆ no current job descriptions for some staff
- ◆ lack of prompt action by management to tackle poor achievement

26. Kwik-Fit's business plan has set objectives with key targets against which to measure its performance, and is currently being reviewed and updated. Through the annual appraisal system, staff have the opportunity to influence the content of the business plan. The company's training and management development policy supports staff training and development needs which are identified as part of the appraisal system. There is a training programme for staff who carry out the appraisal role. Kwik-Fit's documents for staff appraisal are well designed. Appraisal is a two-way process, with a facility on the form for the appraisee to make additional comments. There are no current job descriptions for staff in retail centres. Other staff, who do have current job descriptions, have them reviewed as part of the appraisal process. There are detailed recruitment procedures for both staff and trainees, and everyone receives a statement of their terms and conditions of employment. All staff have access to Kwik-Fit's wide range of in-house training programmes, and are supported by external training opportunities if these meet business and personal development needs. There is currently little formal evaluation of staff training after each course. The technical trainers have a comprehensive ongoing training programme which is planned on a quarterly basis. The company's main subcontractor assists in identifying technical training needs, and plans the programme accordingly. All technical trainers are well-qualified occupationally and possess, or are working towards, the relevant assessor qualifications. The subcontractor also provides a 'train the trainer' three-day programme for all technical trainers. To ensure that technical trainers keep up to date with the latest technological developments, they are trained by equipment and vehicle manufacturers, and make visits to component manufacturers. Technical trainers also have access to Kwik-Fit's internal personal development programmes. There is an identified career-progression route within Kwik-Fit; all staff and trainees are made aware of it and how to work through it. Monthly training reports are circulated to staff and senior managers, identifying training activity across the whole organisation.

27. On- and off-the-job training is well planned and integrated into trainees' personal development programmes. The training programme is modular, and each trainee completes eight modules. Each module lasts 13 weeks, and starts with off-the-job training at one of the company's divisional training centres. The training materials used are developed by Kwik-Fit and its main subcontractor. All modules contain technical training which matches the requirements of the fast-fit business. On returning to their Kwik-Fit retail centre, trainees practise the skills learned under the supervision of retail centre staff. Retail centre staff assess trainees during the fourth and eighth weeks of the module. Formal assessment of the module by a technical trainer takes place during week 13. Trainers and trainees are aware of progress towards the qualification, and what activity will be taking place in the next 13-week period. Management-information systems, along with information from the awarding body's database, are used to identify trainees' progress to date as well as

forthcoming planned training. This information can be collated to produce information about trainees in a variety of formats, which managers use to assess effectiveness of training.

28. Kwik-Fit's training and development co-ordinator, who manages the apprenticeship programme, has been and still is, an active member of the retail motor industry sector's working group on NVQ standards development. As the sole representative of the fast-fit sector, the training co-ordinator's input was valuable to the working group and the standards-setting body. This leading role in the sector's working group, and representation in the group on the standards-setting committee, allowed Kwik-fit and the fast-fit sector to influence the design and accreditation of a qualification to meet the needs of the industry and of trainees.

29. The 1999 intake of trainees is completing a national traineeship programme, which has key skills requirements. Trainees are required to obtain five key skills units which, where possible, should be integrated into the existing NVQ training programme. A subcontractor provides three of the key skills units through a personal development programme. Key skills units are not integrated into the existing NVQ training programme, and trainees are not aware of the key skills requirements of the NVQ programme. Technical trainers have little knowledge of key skills requirements, but Kwik-Fit's retail centre staff have no awareness of key skills. The two subcontractors used to provide training are not bound by any current contractual arrangements or service level agreements. Review meetings take place between the main subcontractors and the central support training and development manager to review training requirements and course development.

Quality assurance

Grade 3

30. Kwik-Fit is accredited as meeting the ISO 9000 quality assurance standard, and is externally audited against its quality procedures on an annual basis. It also has regular audits from the National Training Partnership to check health and safety, monitor training programmes and ensure that the company complies with the financial requirements of its training contract. Customised training programmes are written for Kwik-Fit by a subcontracted organisation, which is also part of Kwik-Fit Holdings plc. The courses follow quality assurance guidelines, and are internally and externally audited for their content and for the way they are delivered by Kwik-Fit's training staff. Training and assessment for NVQs are not part of the ISO 9000 audit process, although detailed programme guidance has recently been produced for all divisional offices. Inspectors identified strengths in quality assurance which would not have been apparent when the self-assessment report was written, as well as another strength which would have been apparent. Some of the weaknesses identified in the self-assessment report had been rectified by the time of inspection, and one additional weakness was found. Inspectors awarded a higher grade than that given in the self-assessment report.

STRENGTHS

- ◆ effective action taken to address weaknesses identified through self-assessment
- ◆ regular audits of design and teaching of customised training programmes
- ◆ clearly planned and recorded process for NVQ training, agreed with awarding body

WEAKNESSES

- ◆ underdeveloped internal verification process
- ◆ no established procedures for monitoring trainees' progress
- ◆ inconsistent implementation of quality assurance procedures across all sites

31. The self-assessment report identified many areas where improvements were needed, and the company drew up an action plan to address the identified weaknesses. The process of self-assessment against a set of quality assurance indicators was found to be a useful exercise, and was helpful in driving forward areas for key improvements within the training department. The self-assessment report was completed in March 1999, and by the time the inspection took place in November 1999, a great deal of work had been done to rectify many of the weaknesses. Improvements in some of the areas started towards the end of 1998, as problems were identified by the NTP. Trainees were not achieving their NVQ within agreed timescales. Training contracts with the NTP were put at risk because no trainees were achieving the award. This resulted in Kwik-Fit's providing additional human resources to rectify the problems by bringing in a training co-ordinator and giving certain responsibilities to district managers, and subsequently the NVQ training and assessment programme was completely revised. The company brought in a different awarding body, which was prepared to work closely with Kwik-Fit's staff to agree on the exact criteria required for trainees to collect sufficient, valid evidence to ensure that they would achieve their NVQ. The resulting documents and programme are thorough and robust, and have resulted in NVQs now starting to be awarded. Other improvements have been made, with systems now being audited to ensure that training is correctly recorded. Assessments have also been improved, with reviews taking place at carefully planned periods to ensure that on- and off-the-job training and assessment are well integrated. The self-assessment report and action taken to address weaknesses is good, but the procedures for implementing the new quality assurance process and for monitoring trainees' progress and achievement are not yet sufficiently established.

32. Kwik-Fit's trainees complete a number of off-the-job training modules which provide the knowledge and skills they require to work effectively in a fast-fit workplace. These modules are designed and written specifically for Kwik-Fit by a specialist training company which is part of Kwik-Fit Holdings plc. Course requirements are agreed on, and the content is written using specific design criteria

which the training company and external auditors ensure complies with the criteria for ISO 9001. When Kwik-Fit is satisfied that a course will provide the required level of training, it is 'signed off' as approved to be used by Kwik-Fit trainers. The way the courses are taught is also audited by the specialist training company, which completes reports about trainers' presentation techniques, course content, resources and external factors such as room layout, lighting and heating. Completed reports are discussed with trainers, and then sent to the divisional manager, who takes appropriate action to remedy any outstanding issues. Each trainer is observed on a regular basis to ensure that the modules are being taught as intended, and that continuous improvements are being applied.

33. The NVQ teaching process is comprehensive and well planned in order to provide a clear route to achieving the award. This process has resulted from the training and development co-ordinator's agreeing on each part of the programme with the awarding body's external verifier. This action was taken because there were concerns by both parties that the award needed to be rigorously assessed to provide trainees with a good-quality qualification which reflected the high level of individual competence being achieved.

34. The internal verification process is underdeveloped and the system designed to verify the award is not sufficiently effective. Although the internal verification system has been completely revised by Kwik-Fit and only recently put into operation, it still does not ensure the thorough sampling of assessment and portfolios. For example, the internal verification system plans the amount of sampling of assessors judgements to be based upon their experience and accuracy to date, but it does not include checks to highlight duplication of evidence or to ensure all units are eventually sampled for each assessor. There are 17 qualified NVQ assessors within Kwik-Fit and two qualified internal verifiers. Four staff are working towards their NVQ assessor qualification and two are working towards becoming internal verifiers.

35. The lack of consistency in implementing quality assurance procedures across all Kwik-Fit's sites was a significant factor in trainees' slow progress. The requirements of the new awarding body for the NVQ has not been applied in all its retail centres. Each centre is having to be issued with, and trained in the use of, common systems and procedures, in line with the organisations' quality assurance requirements. The time taken for action on these requirements has delayed the assessment of existing trainees.

36. Trainees are provided with course evaluation questionnaires to complete at the end of each training module. Information from the questionnaires is analysed by the subcontracted training provider as part of its quality assurance procedures and corrective action to implement any identified areas for improvement is taken. Kwik-Fit has also issued staff with regional satisfaction questionnaires to help them to identify areas for improvement and gauge levels of staff awareness in areas such as equal opportunities, management responsibilities and self-assessment purposed. Trainees also are required to answer specific questions at their quarterly reviews to



check their awareness and satisfaction levels. The resulting information is then analysed for improvement purposes.

37. Trainees' achievements and destinations are not systematically monitored to analyse trends or to contribute to continuous improvement in the quality of training. Trainees' retention is, however, monitored to show in which areas retention of trainees is a problem.