



TRAINING STANDARDS COUNCIL

INSPECTION REPORT NOVEMBER 1999

# Wigston College

## SUMMARY

Wigston College offers satisfactory training in engineering. Occupational training is well organised and trainees have the opportunity to work towards additional qualifications. Key skills are not yet fully integrated with vocational training, however. Training in business administration is satisfactory. There is a range of good learning materials available. Training in health, care and public services is satisfactory. There are well-planned training sessions but some resources used for off-the-job training are in short supply. Equal opportunities data are effectively used and monitored. There is a wide range of support available to trainees. There is no assessment of trainees' occupational and key skills at the start of training. Opportunities for staff development are good. Subcontractors are not adequately monitored. There is little co-ordination of on- and off-the-job training. Wigston College comprehensively monitors and evaluates its training programmes, and employers and trainees are actively encouraged to participate in this process. Monitoring of health and safety in the workplace is ineffective.

### GRADES

| OCCUPATIONAL AREAS             | GRADE |
|--------------------------------|-------|
| Engineering                    | 3     |
| Business administration        | 3     |
| Health, care & public services | 3     |

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

### KEY STRENGTHS

- ◆ good off-the-job training
- ◆ good work placements
- ◆ flexible attendance arrangements for off-the-job sessions in business administration and engineering
- ◆ good range of staff development opportunities
- ◆ effective involvement by employers and trainees in review of training programmes

### KEY WEAKNESSES

- ◆ some missed opportunities for workplace assessment
- ◆ poor understanding of equal opportunities by employers and trainees
- ◆ little initial assessment of trainees' occupational and key skills
- ◆ inadequate monitoring of subcontractors
- ◆ ineffective monitoring of health and safety in the workplace

## INTRODUCTION

1. Wigston College is a small, general further education college. It was established in 1970 and is located in Leicestershire, to the south of the city of Leicester. The college receives the bulk of its funding from the Further Education Funding Council (FEFC) and Leicestershire Training and Enterprise Council (TEC). The TEC contract for work-based training is managed by a college division called Wigston Training. One of the college's six assistant principals, who is a member of the college's senior management team, has overall responsibility for the training agency.

2. In July 1999, the college enrolled 727 full-time and 2,883 part-time students funded by the FEFC. At the time of the inspection by the Training Standards Council, there were 154 TEC-funded trainees and three New Deal clients following work-based training at the college or through one of its subcontractors. The college draws most of its trainees and clients from the city of Leicester, and from southeast Leicestershire.

3. Wigston College offers a range of full- and part-time courses including training towards national vocational qualifications (NVQs) in construction, engineering, business administration, early years care and education, and care, and towards general national vocational qualifications (GNVQs) in information technology and leisure and tourism. The college also offers a variety of courses leading to general certificates of secondary education (GCSEs) and A levels as well as basic skills programmes.

4. Trainees and clients attend off-the-job training at either Wigston College or at one of the five colleges of further education with which it subcontracts. Of the 154 trainees, 120 are modern apprentices, 22 are national trainees, and 12 are on other training programmes. There are 44 trainees and one New Deal client working towards engineering NVQs at levels 2 and 3. There are 100 trainees and two New Deal clients working towards business administration and information technology qualifications. In care, there are 10 trainees working towards care NVQs at levels 2 and 3.

5. Leicestershire has a population of around 929,100. Unemployment rates in the boroughs of Oadby and Wigston at 2.7 per cent are higher than the county average of 2.4 per cent but lower than the national UK average. Unemployment in the city of Leicester is 7.2 per cent, well above the UK average of 4.4 per cent (July 1999). Employment in the area is mainly in education, health and social work, finance and business, retailing, textiles, clothing, rubber, engineering, distribution and construction. Leicestershire is heavily dependent upon small and medium-sized businesses, with 45 per cent of employees working in firms with fewer than 50 people. Minority ethnic groups make up 11.1 per cent of the population of Leicestershire and 28.5 per cent of the population of the city of Leicester.



6. In 1999, the percentage of school leavers in Leicestershire achieving five or more general certificates of education (GCSEs) at grade C and above was 48.3 per cent, while the comparable percentage for the city of Leicester was 37.1 per cent. These results are respectively, slightly above and well below the national average of 47.9 per cent.

## INSPECTION FINDINGS

7. Wigston College prepared a full college self-assessment report in preparation for inspection by the FEFC in November 1999. The self-assessment report was built up from sectional, faculty and policy self-assessment reports. There was widespread involvement of staff in preparing the self-assessment reports. The college prepared a separate self-assessment report for its TEC-funded training programmes two months prior to inspection by the Training Standards Council. The report was produced with contributions from staff and with support and training supplied by Leicestershire TEC.

8. A team of five inspectors spent a total of 18 days at Wigston College during November 1999. Inspectors examined documents from Wigston College, the awarding body and the TEC. They interviewed 41 trainees, the college principal, the assistant principals for curriculum and quality and business development, the training manager, the training co-ordinator, the administrative assistant, course tutors, assessors, internal verifiers, the staff responsible for student support services, employers and workplace supervisors. Inspectors examined trainees' personal files and portfolios. Four training sessions were observed, all of which were given a grade 2 by inspectors. Eleven tutorials, two reviews and two assessments were also observed. Inspectors also spoke to the TEC, government office and one awarding body.

### OCCUPATIONAL AREAS

#### Engineering

#### Grade 3

9. Wigston College has 44 trainees in the occupational area of engineering, of whom 27 are modern apprentices, eight are national trainees and nine are on other training programmes. All trainees are employed. There is one New Deal client, who is on the full-time education and training option. Trainees are employed in small and medium-sized companies. The work of these companies includes the production of aerospace parts, specialist trades and sewing machines. Trainees work towards NVQs at levels 2 and 3 in engineering. They have the opportunity to complete additional NVQ units. Wigston College undertakes all assessment and verification. There are no work-based assessors. Inspectors agreed with the main findings in the college self-assessment report, and identified additional strengths and weaknesses. The grade awarded is lower than that given in the college self-assessment report.

#### STRENGTHS

- ◆ good retention and achievement rates
- ◆ additional optional NVQ units available

### *WEAKNESSES*

- ◆ limited direct assessment by observation in the workplace
- ◆ slow introduction of key skills

10. Training programmes are effectively organised and provide good learning opportunities for trainees. Off-the-job training is well planned. Training sessions are tailored to meet the needs of trainees and employers. Attendance arrangements are flexible. The workshop training facilities at Wigston College are well maintained, but some of the equipment is old. All training staff hold teaching certificates and assessor awards. There are two internal verifiers. Staff do not have recent industrial experience. Trainees' achievement and retention rates at NVQ level 2 are good. In 1997-98, 80 per cent of trainees remained on the programme and achieved a qualification. In 1998-99 the proportions were 92 per cent and 87 per cent respectively.

11. Trainees are given the opportunity to work towards additional NVQ units to increase their skills. Examples include units on welding and fabrication, electronics and sheet metal work. However, a number of trainees are unaware of which NVQ programmes they are following, or ignorant of the requirements of the NVQ they are working towards.

12. An occupationally experienced peripatetic assessor, employed on a consultancy basis by Wigston Training, is responsible for 20 trainees who have recently transferred to the college from another training provider. Assessment of the remaining 24 trainees and the New Deal client is the responsibility of engineering staff at Wigston College. Assessment and associated action plans are detailed, help trainees to focus on future training needs and are regularly referred to. Regular assessment visits are made by tutors/assessors to trainees at work. Relationships between trainers, trainees and employers are productive and valued. There is, however, little assessment by observation of trainees' work-based practices during these visits.

13. Key skills are not fully integrated into national traineeship and modern apprenticeship programmes. Key skills have not been introduced to NVQ level 2 trainees. Trainees working towards NVQs at level 3 are only just being introduced to the need to demonstrate key skills competencies and the associated assessment arrangements.

### **Business administration**

### **Grade 3**

14. There are 100 trainees in this occupational area, of whom 88 are modern apprentices, nine are national trainees, and three are on other training programmes. There are two New Deal clients. Fifty-six modern apprentices are working towards NVQs at levels 2, 3 and 4 in accountancy. Forty-four trainees are working towards

NVQs in business administration at levels 2 and 3. The two New Deal clients are on the full-time training and education option and are working towards qualifications equivalent to level 2 NVQs. Trainees have the opportunity to work towards additional qualifications. The college provides the off-the-job training, assessment and internal verification for 98 of the trainees. The training, assessment and verification for the remaining two trainees are subcontracted to other colleges of further education. Off-the-job training is carried out on a day- and evening-release basis. All trainees are employed in local businesses. These include the borough council, small estate agencies and accountancy practices. The self-assessment report for business administration contained separate sections for accounting and administration. Inspectors agreed with three of the combined strengths and two of the weaknesses identified at self-assessment. Other strengths and weaknesses identified in the self-assessment report were considered to be no more than normal practice or to refer to generic issues. The grade awarded by inspectors was lower than that given in the self-assessment report.

#### *STRENGTHS*

- ◆ additional qualifications available
- ◆ some good training
- ◆ excellent retention rates

#### *WEAKNESSES*

- ◆ missed opportunities for assessment in the workplace
- ◆ slow introduction of key skills

15. Off-the-job training programmes are effectively organised. Sessions are well planned and taught. Individual sessions are adapted to meet the needs of trainees and employers. There is a range of good teaching materials. Training facilities are of a high standard. All trainees have access to modern computers, most of which have internet access. Trainees also have access to an additional drop-in facility in the learning resource centre housing 12 computers.

16. Trainees working towards administration and accounting NVQs are able to adapt their attendance patterns to suit their work and personal commitments. For example, portfolio-building sessions for administration trainees can be arranged on an appointment basis. Trainees are given the opportunity to take additional qualifications, in subjects including customer service, information technology, word and text processing and computerised accounting. All training staff hold assessor awards and teaching qualifications. Many are also internal verifiers.

17. Retention rates in both accounting and administration are excellent. During 1997-98, 100 per cent of accounting trainees and 95 per cent of administration trainees remained on their programmes. In 1997-98, eight accountancy trainees

achieved NVQs at level 2, and two achieved NVQs at level 3. In 1998-99, six trainees achieved NVQs at level 2, nine achieved NVQs at level 3, and three achieved NVQs at level 4. Achievements by business administration trainees were as follows: in 1997-98, one trainee achieved an NVQ at level 2 and three trainees gained NVQs at level 3. In 1998-99, 11 trainees achieved an NVQ at level 2.

#### POOR PRACTICE

*This is an example of an employer not complying with its agreement with the college in respect of modern apprenticeships. One modern apprentice is not given any time off for study or exams. The trainee works full-time and then attends off-the-job training on two evenings each week. No time is made available at work for the trainee to undertake any preparation. In addition, the trainee has to take time off as annual leave in order to take examinations.*

18. College staff carry out regular monitoring visits to employers' premises. However, they do not always observe and assess trainees' work-related activities on a systematic basis. As a result, opportunities for work-based assessment, particularly in accounting, are missed. Workplace supervisors have little or no involvement in the assessment process. Some trainees rely heavily upon portfolio work and simulations carried out at off-the-job training sessions to demonstrate their competency. This sometimes results in trainees having to repeat work unnecessarily and progress for some accounting trainees is slow. There is little co-ordination of on- and off-the-job training. Not all employers are sent copies of course programmes or details of the key skills awards trainees are working towards. They are therefore unable to arrange any on-the-job training which may be necessary. These employers and their trainees do not fully understand the requirements of the modern apprenticeship and national traineeship frameworks. College staff visit the employers of trainees working towards business administration NVQs on an annual basis, to inform them about the requirements of the qualifications.

19. Key skills are not fully integrated with the modern apprenticeship and national traineeship programmes. Recently recruited trainees have little knowledge or understanding of key skills. Those who have been on programmes for some time are introduced to key skills towards the end of their training.

### Health, care & public services (care)

### Grade 3

20. There are 10 trainees in this occupational area, of whom five are modern apprentices and five are national trainees. Trainees work towards NVQs at levels 2 and 3 in care. The care programmes started in September 1998. Two of the trainees began their training during 1998-99, and a further eight started in September 1999. To date, no trainees have achieved a qualification and no trainees have left. Trainees are not registered for key skills qualifications. All trainees are employed. They work in residential and nursing homes for older people. One trainee works a regular night shift on a job-share basis. Trainees on day shifts always work with at least two qualified members of staff. These staff include a matron, a senior nurse and members of staff who already have NVQs in care. There are no workplace assessors. Two peripatetic assessors from Wigston College carry out assessment. Trainees undertake a range of work activities and duties, all related to care of older people. Inspectors did not agree with all of the strengths identified in the self-assessment report. They identified additional strengths and weaknesses and awarded a lower grade than that given in the self-assessment report.



### STRENGTHS

- ◆ well-planned training sessions
- ◆ good portfolio-building support for trainees
- ◆ good learning opportunities in the workplace

### WEAKNESSES

- ◆ lack of validation of some witness statements
- ◆ some insufficient resources for off-the-job training
- ◆ slow introduction of key skills

#### GOOD PRACTICE

*All care trainees have a workplace supervisor who oversees and evaluates their conduct in the workplace. In addition, trainees are encouraged to identify a workplace mentor. Many of the mentors have achieved an NVQ or hold assessor qualifications. The mentors' role is to provide advice on the collection of evidence for the NVQ.*

21. Training sessions are well planned and training plans are comprehensive. Trainees receive a timetable for the off-the-job training sessions at the beginning of their course in September each year. Off-the-job training sessions are held one day each week at the college. The timetable identifies the NVQ units and background knowledge which will be covered at the weekly training sessions. This allows trainees to undertake any necessary preparation. Occupationally experienced and well-qualified staff lead the training sessions. Time is set aside during training sessions for staff to give advice and guidance and lead discussions relating to the collection of evidence for trainees' portfolios. This can be on both an individual and group basis, depending on the individual needs of trainees. The advice and guidance given to trainees is clear and comprehensive. Tutors encourage trainees to participate during these sessions so that good practice and experiences can be shared.

22. Sixty per cent of trainees have been assessed as having literacy and/or numeracy problems. A learning support tutor is present throughout the off-the-job training sessions for trainees who need additional help with reading, writing and numeracy.

23. Trainees spend four days each week in their place of work. The activities and duties carried out by trainees in their workplaces cover a wide range of tasks, enabling them to gain the experience and to develop the skills they need for their NVQs. There are no workplace assessors. Assessors from the college visit trainees in the workplace at least once a fortnight and sometimes weekly. During these visits, trainees are observed, their performance is assessed, and feedback is sought from workplace supervisors and mentors on trainees' conduct and performance at work. This information is then recorded. Following these discussions, a joint decision is made with the trainee and workplace supervisor about further assessment. A document is signed by the trainee and assessor which highlights what will be assessed and over what period of time. Following assessment, trainees receive feedback on their performance. Communication with some employers and supervisors is poor. Employers are not always informed of trainees' progress.

24. Workplace supervisors provide some witness testimonies. Details such as witnesses' names, signatures, and the date and duration of the observation, are not always recorded.

25. Resources such as cups, utensils for feeding, aids for dressing and two wheelchairs are available. However, some resources for practical training are insufficient. For example, there is no bed or linen to demonstrate bed making or the positioning and bathing of clients. The college has recognised these shortages and has taken action to remedy them.

#### POOR PRACTICE

*A trainee who has worked in a nursing home for over 13 weeks has not received a contract of employment. Also, because the employer does not provide uniforms, and the trainee is not in a position to purchase one, the trainee has to wear jeans and trainers to work.*

26. There is one qualified and occupationally experienced internal verifier who also assesses a number of trainees. A trainee internal verifier is currently undertaking some additional internal verification. A qualified internal verifier has not countersigned the judgements made by the trainee internal verifier.

27. Key skills are not yet fully integrated with occupational training and assessment. Assessment of key skills is left until trainees have almost completed their NVQs. In many cases, trainees repeat work done earlier for their NVQs in order to satisfy the key skills requirements of their training programme. Key skills are not always referred to at off-the-job training sessions.

## GENERIC AREAS

### Equal opportunities

### Grade 3

28. Wigston College has an equal opportunities policy which meets the requirements of Leicestershire TEC. However, the policy does not explicitly make reference to current legislation. The policy is reviewed annually by the college's management team and is updated as necessary. It has a related action plan for improvement. An abbreviated version of the policy is included in the student handbook which is given to all trainees at induction. The college monitors trainees in terms of ethnicity, gender and disability. There is good access to all areas of the college for those with mobility problems. Five per cent of trainees are from minority ethnic groups. Three per cent of trainees need additional learning support. Fifty-one per cent of trainees are men. Four per cent of engineering trainees are women. There are three male trainees working towards NVQs in care. The grade awarded by inspectors was lower than that given in the self assessment report.

### STRENGTHS

- ◆ effective promotion of training to under-represented groups
- ◆ good monitoring and use of statistical information

### WEAKNESSES

- ◆ no formal monitoring of equal opportunities in work placements
- ◆ poor understanding of equal opportunities by trainees and employers

29. The college has comprehensive harassment, complaints and grievance procedures. However, trainees do not receive a copy of the grievance procedure. All TEC-funded trainees have access to all of the colleges' facilities and are treated in the same way as students of the college. All marketing materials contain a statement on the college's commitment to equal opportunities and include positive and non-stereotypical images of male and female trainees from a wide variety of ethnic origins. Staff contracts contain a statement that outlines the college's commitment to equality of opportunity. The college has ramps, lifts and toilets which are fitted with hoists and alarms to facilitate access and use by those with mobility problems.

30. The college monitors statistical information on a monthly basis. Analysis of these data has enabled the college to identify that there has been a low take up of training by minority ethnic groups. Only 5 per cent of trainees are members of minority ethnic groups, which is low compared with the proportion of the county's population who are members of minority ethnic groups, which is currently 11 per cent. Action has been taken to address this under-representation. The college works in partnership with an organisation which has good links with local minority ethnic groups to raise the profile of work-based training among the members of these communities. The number of enquiries and subsequent interviews for training has increased since the start of this initiative. Analysis of data collected from interviews with trainees has identified that potential trainees stay on in full-time education if their GCSE grades are good, and that work-based training is viewed as a secondary option. This information has been used to guide the college's marketing strategies. Analysis of data relating to its staff revealed that there was a low level of recruitment of people with disabilities. The recruitment process was subsequently revised. All applicants with any form of disability are now guaranteed an interview.

31. A contract with the TEC requires all employers providing work placements to have a written equal opportunities policy. However, there is no such contract between Wigston College and the employers, and some employers do not have a written equal opportunities policy. There is no systematic monitoring of equal opportunities practices in the workplace. Employers are not made aware of the college's equal opportunities policy. The college does not check trainees' understanding of equal opportunities or their recollection of the information given to them at induction.

32. Trainees have little recollection of equal opportunities being discussed at induction. Employers and trainees have a poor understanding of equal opportunities issues and employers' knowledge is limited to their own companies' procedures.

The college does not offer any advice or guidance to employers about their responsibilities to trainees in respect of equal opportunities.

## Trainee support

## Grade 3

33. In addition to direct applications from individuals, trainees are also referred to Wigston College by the careers service and through personal recommendations. A member of Wigston Training interviews all potential trainees. Work placements are found for unemployed trainees, after careful matching of the trainees' skills, interests and NVQ requirements with the needs of potential work placement providers. All trainees are given interview skills training prior to their interviews with employers. At induction, there is an initial assessment of their basic skills. Pastoral support is offered during progress review visits to workplaces. The college offers welfare support, counselling, careers guidance, job-search training and facilities, and support with basic skills. Inspectors identified strengths and weaknesses in addition to those identified by the college, and awarded a lower grade than that given in the self-assessment report.

### *STRENGTHS*

- ◆ thorough induction for trainees
- ◆ good advice and guidance available to trainees
- ◆ effective support for trainees with disabilities

### *WEAKNESSES*

- ◆ little accreditation of trainees' prior learning
- ◆ no initial assessment of trainees' occupational and key skills
- ◆ failure to individualise training plans
- ◆ lack of rigour of trainees' progress reviews

34. All trainees receive a comprehensive induction where the requirements of the qualifications they will be working towards and the services that the college offers are explained to them.

35. Trainees receive good support in addition to that which the college gives them to help them achieve their vocational qualifications. All have access to welfare support, counselling and careers guidance. Trainees are able to use the facilities in the resource centre, and training is available in job-search and interview techniques, and in the preparation of curricula vitae. All trainees are able to contact Wigston College's staff for guidance and support, and many make use of this facility.

36. There is little accreditation of trainees' prior learning and only one member of staff possesses a qualification in this skill.

**GOOD PRACTICE**

*One of Wigston College's modern apprentices in business administration is deaf. The college has provided this trainee with a 'signer'. After each training session, the signer checks with the tutor and the trainee that the trainee's understanding of the information given is correct.*

37. There is no assessment of trainees' occupational or key skills at the start of the training programmes. The college is therefore unaware of whether trainees are capable of achieving the key skills they are to work towards as part of their training programme. The college recognises that this area of their work requires improvement and has set up a small trial in relation to the assessment of key skills. Analysis of this has shown that further development work is necessary. Training plans are not individualised. All training plans have the same start and leaving dates for all trainees. The plans are not updated as trainees progress towards their qualifications. Additional support given to trainees is not always recorded.

38. Trainees' progress reviews are not rigorous, and are not always carried out by occupationally experienced members of staff. Demanding targets for completion are not always set. Staff carrying out reviews do not always make reference to previous reviews.

**Management of training****Grade 4**

39. Wigston Training, a unit of Wigston College, manages the TEC-funded and New Deal training programmes offered by the college. The unit reports to one of the college's assistant principals, who also has responsibility for the college's marketing. Wigston Training has four members of staff: a full-time training manager, who oversees the training programmes, a full-time training link co-ordinator, a full-time administrative/sales assistant and a self-employed engineering training consultant. They are responsible for administering the training programmes, securing work placements for those trainees who are unemployed, undertaking trainees' progress reviews, and arranging trainees' attendance at off-the job training sessions with employers. Off-the-job occupational training is the responsibility of two college faculties. They offer training in a diverse range of skills. Each is headed by a college assistant principal. Within teaching faculties there are section managers who are supported by curriculum leaders and a team of lecturers and support staff. A third faculty offers cross-college learning support and programmes for those with special learning difficulties and disabilities. Similar arrangements for off-the-job training exist at the college's subcontractors, which are also colleges of further education. The college 'inherited' these subcontracts when it recently took responsibility for the existing trainees of another training organisation. The work of the college is set out in a comprehensive range of policies and procedures. There are additional policies and procedures for those aspects of the college's work which relate to work-based training, especially those aspects concerned with the management of TEC and New Deal contracts. Operating plans, with associated objectives and targets, are produced on an annual basis by the various sections of the college. These are given direction by the college's mission statement and strategic plan, and by the outcomes of annual self-assessment. The

college has achieved and maintains its status as an Investor in People. The college's self-assessment report for management of training identified four strengths and one weakness. Inspectors agreed with two of the strengths and found one other. They also found a different set of weaknesses and awarded a lower grade than that given in the college's self-assessment report.

### *STRENGTHS*

- ◆ comprehensive college policies and procedures
- ◆ thorough induction for staff
- ◆ good staff development and training arrangements

### *WEAKNESSES*

- ◆ inadequate monitoring of subcontractors
- ◆ little co-ordination of on- and off-the-job training
- ◆ lack of liaison between college's training agency and teaching departments

40. The work of Wigston College is guided by a comprehensive set of policies and procedures. They are clearly set out and understandable. Staff are aware of their content. The procedures can be readily linked to staff responsibilities outlined in job descriptions and provide a framework from which all staff can carry out their daily duties. The policies and procedures are reviewed annually to take account of changes in legislation and operational requirements.

41. Staff recruitment is managed in a fair manner. Posts are advertised locally and nationally. The college ensures advertising and the recruitment process avoids discrimination and encourages application from all sectors of the community. Job descriptions are detailed, showing role, purpose, duties and specific responsibilities. All job descriptions contain a set of standards applicable to all who work for the college. The standards include reference to ensuring a spirit and practice of equality of opportunity and maintaining a responsibility for the proper practice of health and safety at work. Arrangements for staff induction are thorough. Incoming staff are given every opportunity to grow into their roles through a well-considered induction programme of guidance and support. A detailed induction manual introduces new staff to some of the college's key policies and procedures. The manual contains a checklist covering events all new staff should attend. Each new member of staff is allocated a mentor and a personal development plan.

42. There are good procedures for staff appraisal and development. Staff are given a formal 'personal development review' each year. Initially, both reviewer and reviewee identify the reviewee's performance against set criteria, and their contribution towards meeting the objectives in the college's strategic plan. A formal meeting then takes place where the results of the performance review are discussed. Subsequently, to aid improvement, actions and/or training are identified

and set down in the reviewee's personal development plan. The outcomes of reviews are brought forward into the college's operational plan as future objectives. Analysis of training and development needs identified in the operational plan results in both college-wide and individual training programmes for staff. The college has a planned, weekly, half-day training and development period for all staff. This can take the form of events for the whole college on national initiatives, or 'focus groups' preparing for curriculum innovation.

43. The college does not have a policy or appropriate procedures through which it can effectively manage subcontracted training. Service level agreements were produced for all five subcontractors in 1999. Despite the introduction of these agreements, the college is still not adequately monitoring the performance of its subcontractors, the appropriateness of their resources, or the quality of the training which they provide. Current monitoring arrangements are too informal to allow objective analysis and are thus insufficient to guide decision making by the college.

44. Few employers have a clear understanding of the content of their trainees' training programmes. Nor do they fully understand trainees' development needs or their progress towards and achievement of assessment targets. Consequently, they are unable to make a planned contribution to the training process. While some progress reviews and assessments do occur in the workplace, they are often unstructured. The outcomes of reviews and assessments are not always communicated to employers and when they are, the information they contain is often too general in nature to be of any real value.

45. There is a lack of liaison between Wigston Training and the college's teaching faculties. The college's training agency has little knowledge of the content of training programmes and does not know how trainees are progressing against training targets. College faculties are not fully conversant with the outcomes of progress reviews carried out by the training agency's staff. Nor are all training agency staff appropriately qualified to carry out trainees' progress reviews. The different sections of the college are not adequately supporting each other. They are failing to ensure that on- and off-the-job training and assessment are properly integrated, and that all parties are fully aware of and contribute purposefully towards trainees' development, progress, and achievement.

### **Quality assurance**

### **Grade 3**

46. Quality assurance is the responsibility of the assistant principal for curriculum and quality. The heads of faculty are responsible for managing the quality assurance of their faculties' work on a day-by-day basis. The college has a quality assurance handbook which is supplemented by supporting handbooks on internal verification, internal inspection, and classroom observation, as well as an introductory pack for tutors. The college is familiar with the process of self-assessment, having been inspected on several occasions by the FEFC. The self-assessment report is the second it has produced for its work-based training



programmes. For quality assurance, one of the strengths in the self-assessment report represented no more than normal practice. Two others referred to trainee support and management of training. One of the weaknesses referred to management of training. The grade awarded by inspectors was the same as that given in the self-assessment report.

### *STRENGTHS*

- ◆ effective gathering and use of feedback from trainees and employers
- ◆ effective cycle of regular performance reviews and action-planning

### *WEAKNESSES*

- ◆ ineffective monitoring of health and safety in the workplace
- ◆ lack of rigour of self-assessment report
- ◆ lack of rigour in internal verification practices

47. Twice a year, Wigston College seeks feedback from its students. The questionnaires used are comprehensive and include topics such as induction, course organisation, teaching materials, feedback from tutors, support and tutorials. Responses are analysed and action is taken where appropriate. It recently evaluated the experiences of its TEC-funded trainees. Despite the questionnaire's limited scope and detail, four changes have been made to the training process. These include extending the duration of trainees' inductions and involving specialist occupational lecturers in the induction programme.

48. Wigston College also seeks the views and ideas of staff and employers. Meetings are held twice a year with subject leaders, the staff of Wigston Training, and representatives of employers, students and trainees. Minutes are taken and action points are identified. When employers, students or trainees are unable to attend, they are encouraged to express their views, concerns and feedback in writing. Employers welcome this participation. Where areas for concern have been raised, positive action has been taken.

49. In March 1999, service standards were introduced across the college. This followed a survey of staff and an investigation into aspects of the college's work. Following an analysis of the findings and staff's responses, targets for improvement were set for all sections of the college. Action plans were designed to address areas needing to be improved. There is a comprehensive handbook for assessors and internal verifiers. The handbook clearly outlines the roles and responsibilities of those involved in the assessment process. Service level agreements have been drawn up for all of the organisations with which the college subcontracts. These agreements specify the main areas of responsibility. However, only one of these agreements has been signed and returned by a subcontractor.



50. Wigston Training's staff meet regularly with the assistant principal who has overall responsibility for their work. A comprehensive monthly report is produced on all aspects of the unit's work and performance. The report includes information on recruitment, training activities, vacancy/placement opportunities, total number of trainees, marketing initiatives and performance against the TEC contract. Following discussions with Wigston Training, the content of the report is shared with the college's management group. Where necessary, issues raised are referred to subject leaders or discussed at subsequent boards of study. Any action points arising from TEC audits are promptly acted upon.

51. The TEC contract requires health and safety checks to be carried out before a trainee starts on a training programme, with each placement categorised as low, medium or high risk. Subsequent checks should be scheduled for one year, six or three months respectively. However, these checks do not take place. Some trainees have been on training programmes for up to one year and there have been no health and safety checks by the college of their work placements. Many of the documents used to record the details of health and safety checks are incomplete. Dates of the placement checks, the signature of those undertaking the check, and review dates are often missing. Many of the check documents do not contain details of employers' liability insurance. Where employers' insurance certificates have expired, there is no system to ensure that they have been renewed.

52. The college's internal verification procedures are well recorded but in practice they are not always adhered to. The quality of internal verification varies among the different programme areas. In business administration, internal verifiers give insufficient feedback to assessors and there is an over-reliance on portfolio work. There is little observation of assessors at work.

53. The self-assessment report contains data on trainees' achievements and when they leave their programmes, and details of the college's staffing structure. Action plans for all areas are included. Realistic target and review dates are identified, as are those individuals with particular responsibility for ensuring that actions are taken. However, the self-assessment report lacks rigour. Some of the strengths identified in the occupational sections of the report are generic issues. Many of the strengths outlined in the report represented no more than normal practice. Four of the seven grades awarded by inspectors are lower than those given in the self-assessment report. The three remaining grades are the same.