



TRAINING STANDARDS COUNCIL

INSPECTION REPORT FEBRUARY 2000

# Yeovil College

## SUMMARY

Yeovil College has good work placements for its trainees across the range of occupational areas. Training in engineering and business administration is good. In engineering there are high rates of achievement and of retention of trainees on their course, and good opportunities for progression. In business administration the off-the-job training is excellent and imaginative projects are used for key skills. Hospitality training is satisfactory with programmes developed to meet individuals' and employers' needs. Training in hair and beauty is less than satisfactory. While the salons are good and there is a clear understanding of national vocational qualifications (NVQs), key skills are not implemented and achievement rates are low. Training in health, care and public services is less than satisfactory. Supervision is strong and there is effective off-the-job training but achievement rates are low and assessment is weak. Work to support equal opportunities is less than satisfactory. While trainees are protected from discrimination within the college, equality of opportunity is not monitored in the workplace and key staff lack training in this area of work. Trainees are well recruited, and receive satisfactory personal support, but there are weak reviews of trainees' performance and adequate targets are not set for trainees. Training plans are not used well. Management of training is satisfactory. The college is responsive to local employers' needs, and there is good internal communication. The management information system needs further development. Quality assurance is satisfactory with frequent surveys of opinions, effective programme reviews, and regular observation of college training. Data are not evaluated.

### GRADES

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

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

### KEY STRENGTHS

- ◆ college responsive to local employers' needs
- ◆ high retention and achievement rates in engineering
- ◆ wide range of good work placements
- ◆ good standard of NVQ portfolios
- ◆ excellent staff development

### KEY WEAKNESSES

- ◆ weak reviews of trainees' performance
- ◆ inconsistent training of key skills
- ◆ no monitoring of equal opportunity in the workplace
- ◆ ineffective use of management information
- ◆ no target setting
- ◆ inconsistent internal verification

## INTRODUCTION

1. Yeovil College is a tertiary college serving the market town of Yeovil and a wide rural area of south Somerset and north Dorset. As such it offers post 16 education to a significant proportion of the population in a relatively isolated region where there is little alternative choice of provider. The college employs 440 staff. They are based on two sites within Yeovil. The college's main funding source is the Further Education Funding Council (FEFC), and at the times of the inspection there were over 5,000 enrolments on full- and part-time courses. About 10 per cent of the college's provision is represented by higher education courses. At the time of inspection, 327 trainees were in government-funded work-based training supported by a contract with Somerset Training and Enterprise Council (TEC). Of these, 203 trainees were on programmes in engineering, 37 in business administration, 21 in hospitality, 10 in hair and beauty, and 56 in health care and public services. There are two New Deal clients on the full-time education and training programme, and there are small numbers of trainees in five additional occupational areas which were not inspected.

2. Yeovil's travel to work area has a population of approximately 150,000 and is dominated by a dependence on a major aerospace manufacturer and supporting advanced engineering companies. One third of the workforce is employed in this area. The service sector is small, but the developing role of Yeovil as a sub-regional centre is likely to enhance this. There is a small food processing industry in the several small market towns surrounding Yeovil. Transport links to Yeovil are not good which limits trainees' participation in programmes. The local economy is growing strongly. There is population growth and very low unemployment which in 1998, was 2 per cent, less than half the national average.

3. The minority ethnic population in Somerset is under 1 per cent. In 1999 the proportion of school leavers achieving five or more general certificates of education (GCSEs) at grade C or above was 52.7 per cent compared with the national average of 47.9 per cent. Participation rates in post 16 education are traditionally lower in the Southwest than the rest of the country and in Yeovil have fluctuated around 67 per cent for the last three years.

## INSPECTION FINDINGS

4. Yeovil College is subject to the Further Education Funding Council's (FEFC) self-assessment and four-yearly inspection process and is familiar with the concept of self-assessment. The college's vice principal, business development manager, and curriculum managers attended a one-day self-assessment development event and were involved with the training co-ordinators in the self-assessment process. The first self-assessment report for the Training Standards Council was written in March 1999 and submitted to the quality committee of the college, which is chaired by the principal. The current self-assessment report was produced in November 1999 and included an action plan designed to address areas identified as weaknesses. Some of these strengths and weaknesses had been addressed prior to the inspection.

5. The inspection was carried out jointly with the FEFC. Eight inspectors from the Training Standards Council spent a total of 34 days at Yeovil College. They conducted 49 staff interviews, and interviewed 47 workplace supervisors, managers and trainers, and 89 trainees. They observed instruction in the classroom, visited 54 work placements and reviewed trainees' files, management information and promotional material.

Grades awarded to instruction sessions

	GRADE 1	GRADE 2	GRADE 3	GRADE 4	GRADE 5	TOTAL
Engineering	2	5	3			10
Business administration	1	1				2
Hospitality		2				2
Hair & beauty		2				2
Health, care & public services		1		1		2
<b>Total</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>18</b>

## OCCUPATIONAL AREAS

### Engineering

### Grade 2

6. There are 193 modern apprentices and 10 national trainees in engineering training. One hundred and two trainees are on mechanical engineering courses, all of whom were modern apprentices, apart from 10 national trainees. A further 23 modern apprentices are on electrical engineering courses, and the remaining 68 modern apprentices are on aeronautical courses. A large variety of engineering employers are available in the college's travel to work area. Size varies from the

smallest company, in which one trainee works with the owner and four other skilled employees, to a large company with 70 trainees and more than 3,000 employees in total. Some employers have staff qualified to carry out assessments in the workplace. One of the employers also has an internal verifier. Most others rely upon the college to provide workplace assessments and internal verification. The college's engineering staff, who are located on two sites in Yeovil, provides most off-the-job training. A variety of programmes is offered. The college recruits a mix of company sponsored and non-sponsored trainees who undertake an intensive one-year programme of workshop training supported by part-time study during which they acquire theoretical knowledge. Six female trainees are on engineering programmes. There are no trainees with disabilities or from minority ethnic groups. Most strengths given in the self-assessment report were either considered by inspectors to be no more than normal practice or were not agreed by inspectors. Two of the weaknesses were agreed and the third one had been resolved prior to the inspection. The inspectors agreed with the grade given in the self-assessment report.

#### *STRENGTHS*

- ◆ high retention and achievement rates
- ◆ good opportunities for progression
- ◆ wide range of good quality work placements
- ◆ good quality portfolios

#### *WEAKNESSES*

- ◆ some weak assessment practices
- ◆ inconsistent teaching of key skills
- ◆ missed opportunities for co-ordination of on- and off-the-job training
- ◆ lack of understanding of NVQ process by trainees and employers
- ◆ poor resources for off-the-job welding training

7. Over the last three years, five trainees left their course early in 1998, four left early in 1999 and one in 2000. The total number of trainees on programmes in 1998 was 180, rising to 204 in late 1999. Over 95 per cent of these trainees completed their training. All trainees who completed their programmes achieved their qualifications. While these data were not readily available from the management information system, they were readily obtained by the training co-ordinator from paper records. Employers and college staff encourage trainees to undertake additional training beyond that specified in their individual training plan. Many trainees take advantage of this opportunity and a wide range of courses is on offer. These include additional welder training, courses on abrasive wheels, on working with adhesives, overhead crane instruction, and higher certificate and diploma qualifications. Of the trainees, 90 are employed in companies which have annual appraisal of performance, including the acquisition of additional skills and

qualifications. This can influence salary increases. This encourages trainees to continue learning.

8. Trainees are employed in a wide range of work placements. One trainee works with three skilled fitters and the owner of the firm in a remote farm building. They serve farmers up to 60 miles away by providing an immense range of engineering solutions for broken equipment. Elsewhere, 63 trainees work in a company with more than 3,000 employees in which newly recruited trainees are introduced to a variety of departments on the site. The different departments included electrical and mechanical subassemblies, as well as the final assembly of complex finished equipment which involves several weeks of work. During their time in each department trainees are assigned learning tasks which require them to work with others. The supervisor reviews their performance before they leave each area. These experiences enable trainees to make informed choices later in their training when deciding on their preferred final department for employment. Every workplace offered training in a broad range of skills. In total, the 203 trainees on the programme are working in 40 different companies.

9. Portfolios are well organised, clearly indexed and presented to a very high standard. One trainee, who was working in the technical design office of a company manufacturing large fabrications for the heavy construction industry, had established a high level of confidence among his managers. His portfolio contained copies of detailed parts lists and reports of site visits involving discussions with site engineers about technical specifications of the product to be fabricated. Minutes of the discussions had been faxed to the site and copies retained in the portfolio. Extensive use of a camera portrayed the manufacturing process at important stages, as well as recording the finished product. Other evidence not only adequately conveyed the skills acquired during the project but also showed evidence of his development of several key skills, including communications skills at higher levels, and competence in information technology.

10. Assessment procedures are sometimes poor. Some final year trainees within a few months of completion had not received an assessment for up to 14 months and had no units signed off. Other trainees approaching the completion of their training were receiving fortnightly assessment visits in an effort to complete both their work skill and key skill portfolios in time. Trainees who had started training within the last 18 months were being assessed on a six to eight weekly basis, with regular target dates being set. The assessment procedures now in place will benefit all trainees.

11. Training in key skills is not consistent. Some final year trainees are retrospectively reviewing their portfolios for evidence of their competence in key skills which they can transfer to their key skills portfolio. The last minute rush to complete the key skills portfolio causes a conflict of priorities for trainees who, at the same time, are completing the work skill portfolios and other off-the-job training. In contrast, some first year trainees, because they lack the skill and experience early on to collect evidence of their vocational skills due to the high precision of the employer's products, focus heavily on key skills. This applies where trainees are sampling each work area within the company. Meeting with people they have never

met before to work on structured assignments encourages team working. Key skills are well integrated into NVQs in the second and third year of the programme.

12. Many employers and trainees show little understanding of the NVQ framework, the importance of key skills or the requirement to co-ordinate on- and off-the-job training. The review and assessment sessions with trainees do not always include the employer who could be more involved in the trainee's training and progression through the programme. Because of this, some portfolio building is slow. An area in which there is good co-ordination of on- and off-the-job training is in the aeronautical engineering courses, in which the college works with a larger employer.

13. Several trainees expressed concerns about the lack of resources within the college's welding workshop. Training has been delayed or interrupted by frequent equipment failures, by a lack of appropriate test pieces for welding exercises, and a shortage of welding rods. Managers in the engineering department have agreed that new investments are required in the area. Additional resources have been approved and the problems are currently being addressed.

## **Business administration**

## **Grade 2**

14. There are currently 37 young people following programmes in business administration. Twenty-two are working towards level 2 NVQs in administration, 10 are working towards level 3 in administration, two are working towards level 2 in the use of information technology, three are working towards accounting NVQs. Of these, 10 are youth trainees, 12 national trainees, 13 modern apprentices and two New Deal clients. Eight trainees are employed by one large local company, which the training is carried out by the college in a training room on the employer's premises. The other administration trainees are employed or on work placements in local small businesses, and attend college one day a week for off-the-job training. The two information technology trainees are permanent employees of the college who are working as information technology support technicians. Trainees have the opportunity to obtain additional qualifications such as computer information and information technology, integrated business technology, mailmerge and textprocessing. Trainers and assessors are well qualified and have relevant occupational experience. Over the last three years, a total of 116 trainees have started courses. Of these, 33 left their course early and 24 completed their programme. In 1997, five trainees achieved their full qualification and 13 left early, and in 1999, 13 trainees achieved their qualification and eight left their programme early. In 1999, 81 per cent of trainees obtained jobs and 75 per cent of trainees complete the programme. The self-assessment report gave a good picture of the training, but underestimated the positive impact on the trainees of high standard of the training and the strong links forged with employers. Some of the strengths given in the report were considered to be no more than normal practice, but the inspectors found additional strengths. The grade awarded was higher than that given in the self-assessment report.

### STRENGTHS

- ◆ good integration of on- and off-the-job training
- ◆ excellent off-the-job training
- ◆ imaginative projects for the development of modern apprentices' key skills

### WEAKNESSES

- ◆ slow achievement rates of some trainees

#### GOOD PRACTICE

*School leavers enrolling for programmes starting in September programmes can achieve a certificate in computer and information technology (CLAIT) before starting their NVQ programme in September. They gain this by attending the drop-in office technology centre over the summer. This enables them to progress more quickly on their NVQ in September.*

15. Trainees are carefully matched to their placement and receive a high level of support from their employers. They are visited by the training co-ordinator in the workplace on a three-monthly basis for written reviews with the employer. Unrecorded reviews and action planning take place weekly at the college. Training plans are regularly updated. The training co-ordinator works closely with employers to ensure that workplace training is dovetailed with off-the-job training and provides the trainees with schemes of work. One major employer recruits eight national trainees each year, using a number of individual and group selection methods to ensure the best fit for the job and the training. On-the-job training is planned so that trainees move from department to department to gain the experience required for particular NVQ units. Qualified workplace assessors are used where possible to maximise opportunities for on-the-job assessment. All employers are positive about the support received from the college and value the speed with which any issues are addressed by the training co-ordinator. The excellent relationships have resulted in mutual benefits. For example, one employer voluntarily extended a trainee's work placement by six months until she had finished her NVQ. For its part, the college screens suitable work experience candidates for the employer and this leads to permanent employment opportunities.

16. Off-the job training is of a high standard. The teaching is flexible, and takes place either on employers' premises or at the college in one of the workshops which have been recently refurbished with new computers and industry standard software. There is access to the Internet and e-mail, and paper resources include textbooks, reference books, and tailor-made learning packages. One large employer has a training suite in which the eight national trainees are trained by college staff on a weekly basis. This employer works in partnership with the college, using its qualified assessors for on-the-job assessment. Trainees have access to the same type of training facilities as offered within the college. There is also an open learning centre in which the eight trainees have access to computer-based training packages to supplement their NVQ. The college trainers use a variety of learning techniques, including group sessions and one-to-one tuition.

17. Key skills are effectively integrated into the programmes of national trainees and modern apprentices from the start of the programme. The college timetables key skills sessions on a regular basis. Trainees are set challenging and interesting projects which help trainees produce evidence for key skills and their NVQ. One workplace project was to arrange an induction programme at head office for a



group of recently recruited engineering apprentices. Another project was to make arrangements for the personnel manager to visit universities throughout the United Kingdom to recruit engineering trainees. The arrangements included organising speakers, refreshments and travel bookings. For trainees unable to complete projects at work, an imaginative project was devised in which day-release trainees were required to raise £1,000 from local businesses for cancer research, part of which involved planning a sponsored trip to Ireland. This involved correspondence, making travel arrangements and bookings.

18. Some trainees have taken a long time to achieve their NVQs. For example, two information technology trainees have been on the programme for over two years. Since the appointment of a new training co-ordinator a year ago, regular assessment has been arranged and the trainees are rapidly completing their training plan. Last year modern apprentices also made slow progress. More rigorous target-setting and action-planning have recently been introduced to enable all trainees to complete their NVQ as quickly as possible.

### **Hospitality**

### **Grade 3**

19. Yeovil College has 21 trainees in hospitality and catering. Of these 14 are modern apprentices working towards qualifications in general cookery, on-licensed premises supervision, hospitality services, food service, patisserie and multi-skill hospitality services. Of the five national trainees, four are working towards food preparation and one towards bar service qualifications. One New Deal client is undertaking a qualification in food and drink service and one other trainee is studying for a bar service qualification. All trainees are employed within the industry. The self-assessment report identified the major strengths and weaknesses within this area of work. Inspectors agreed with the main findings given in the report but also identified other strengths and weaknesses.

#### *STRENGTHS*

- ◆ variety of good work placements
- ◆ good access to supportive staff
- ◆ programmes developed to meet individuals and employers' needs

#### *WEAKNESSES*

- ◆ poor achievement rates
- ◆ unstructured on-the-job training

20. All trainees receive an interview prior to joining their training programme to assess their suitability for training and the appropriate level of programme. The NVQ process is explained in detail to both themselves and their employers, although some employers fail to have a full understanding of the process. A good induction

programme follows this. An assessment of the trainees learning needs is undertaken where appropriate. Good course handbooks are provided for trainees by the college and there is also an employer handbook.

21. College staff have good vocational and training qualifications as well as comprehensive industrial experience. A detailed and well-documented staff appraisal and development system is closely linked to the demands of the curriculum. Staff are aware of their roles and responsibilities for training programmes. There is good communication between them which is often not recorded. Trainees are well supported by both college staff and workplace supervisors both of whom are readily available to them. Resources within the college are appropriate and reflect industry standards in food preparation and service. The variety of well-chosen work placements provides trainees with a good range of experiences. Resources within these work placements are generally of a high standard. Trainees receive appropriate learning materials during training. Written work is well marked with detailed comments on the trainees' progress.

22. Trainees work towards the appropriate standards which meet the requirements of the awarding body. The college's schemes of work are detailed and identify the intended outcomes but they do not always take full account of the trainees' experiences at work. Employers are provided with schemes of work for their own reference. Key skills have been integrated into the training programmes. Although there are good relationships between the college and the workplace staff, there is little structured training that takes place on the job. There is a lack of work-based assessment in food preparation. This results in missed opportunities to gather evidence of trainees' work-based competencies through the direct observation of trainees by assessors.

23. Trainees are encouraged to negotiate when their assessment should take place and to take responsibility for their own learning. Some trainees attend college one day a week and others are attending open learning programmes once every four weeks. This is for trainees for whom the necessary resources for training and assessment are not available within the college. Attendance by this mode has supported the policy of widening participation of trainees because the necessary resources were unavailable in some of the workplaces.

24. All trainees undertake qualifications in basic food hygiene and basic health and safety, in addition to their primary training goal. Assessments are well recorded. There is well-established process of internal verification, which is carried out both during and at the completion of the programmes. Programme reviews which are undertaken by the college are recorded and include clear action plans to help improve training programmes further. Targets for the achievement of both units and the full qualifications, and which are included in the trainees' individual training plans, are not sufficiently detailed or demanding and the lack of on-the-job assessment in some cases reduces the rate of achievement for some trainees. There are no targets set for the retention of trainees or for their achievements. In 1997-98, there were 14 trainees who started the course and four trainees who were continuing with their training. Of these, nine left without a qualification, resulting in a

50 per cent retention rate. For 1998-99, 14 trainees were recruited with nine continuing. Eight achieved a qualification and nine left without achieving a qualification resulting in a 61 per cent retention rate and a 40 per cent achievement rate. Retention has improved during the past three years. Trainees attendance is well monitored both at college and in the workplace.

### **Hair & beauty**

### **Grade 4**

25. There are 10 trainees in hairdressing. Most take NVQs at level 1 before proceeding to NVQs at level 2. Currently the college is not offering NVQs at level 3 and has recently transferred the modern apprentices to the national traineeship programme as a result of this decision. The one remaining modern apprentice is leaving shortly. All apprentices and national trainees take key skills as part of their course. There are three trainees following the careerships programme which does not include key skills. All trainees attend college one day a week in term time and work in salons within a 15 mile radius of Yeovil. Trainees are visited in their salons approximately every 13 weeks for general progress reviews. These visits also check for any issues which may be concerning trainees or employers. The college's training co-ordinator, who carries out the reviews, is a hairdresser and she also sees the trainees at college to give them the opportunity to talk to her. Most trainees find their own salon placement prior to joining the work-based training schemes and attending college. In the period 1997-99, all trainees left their programmes early, having completed an average of 27 weeks of training. In the three year period from 1997, 24 trainees started training. One trainee who started in 1997 achieved an NVQ at level 2 in September 1999. Seven trainees completed NVQs at level 1 in 1999 after approximately seven months training and have now progressed to NVQs at level 2 for the remainder of their two-year training programme. Certification was delayed until July 1999 due to centre approval being temporarily withdrawn. Current first year trainees are just completing NVQs at level 1 after five months training and are due to progress to NVQs at level 2.

#### *STRENGTHS*

- ◆ well-resourced salons
- ◆ good off-the-job training
- ◆ clear understanding of NVQs by trainees
- ◆ well-presented NVQ portfolios

#### *WEAKNESSES*

- ◆ absence of key skills training
- ◆ poor achievement rates at level 2 NVQ
- ◆ slow pace of learning and assessment
- ◆ weak co-ordination of on- and off-the-job training

26. Trainees work in a good variety of well-resourced salons. The salons vary in size, in the treatments offered and in the clientele they attract. Most are well equipped with modern facilities and a good range of products for salon use and for retailing. Most trainees have frequent opportunities to practise new skills on 'model clients' as well as working alongside senior staff when carrying out junior salon duties.

27. The college's theory and practical training sessions are of a good standard. All trainees attend college on the same day of the week. The college's timetables have recently been altered so that in future trainees will be taught in a combined group. There is a good range of systems and documents which have recently been introduced by the hairdressing team. During 1999 hairdressing was moved to a new salon with ground floor access. The new college salon has a good range of training resources, including a demonstration area with good lighting and well-placed mirrors, a video and television and a good stock of practice 'block' heads. There is a good sized dispensary, and attractive displays of retail products. The number of clients is increasing and the college uses a variety of marketing strategies.

28. The trainees have a clear understanding of the structure of the NVQs and can explain how different hairdressing treatments relate to the NVQ requirements. Portfolio evidence is clearly cross-referenced to the NVQ criteria and trainees are supported in this process by their college tutors. The NVQ portfolios at levels 1 and 2 contain work which is of a good standard, neatly presented and many pieces of work are produced on computers. Many trainees use their home computers as they find that timetabling and travel arrangements restrict access to the college's computers. Trainees' work is clearly assessed with useful comments. Many of and procedures have been introduced recently, including internal verification and action planning for assessment in the workplace by college assessors.

**POOR PRACTICE**

*The evidence which trainees gather for their hairdressing portfolios for the level 1 NVQ is of a good standard but it is not matched to the level 2 NVQ criteria. Nor is it accredited to aid the fast tracking of trainees.*

29. Achievement of the NVQ at level 2 is poor. One trainee has achieved level 2 since 1997. The pace of learning and assessment is slow and nearly all trainees systematically take NVQs at level 1 before starting level 2. The standard of work in the trainees' NVQ portfolios at level 1 is well above the required level. Trainees' feedback sheets, which were completed in November 1999, inspection interviews and the portfolio evidence show that trainees are insufficiently challenged. The NVQ at level 1 is designed to be completed in approximately 13 weeks. Some trainees have assessments outstanding for tasks which they carry out regularly at work. No trainees have completed the modern apprenticeship or national traineeship frameworks. There is no training in key skills and log books have only recently been issued to trainees. Timetables do not include the teaching or assessment of key skills even though the trainees' achievements in key skills are expected to be recorded and tracked during tutorials.

30. There is weak co-ordination of on- and off-the-job training. Many employers and trainers in salons lack awareness of the NVQ structure and requirements. Some employers hold assessor awards and are not used by the college to assess their trainees at work. There is little use of work-based evidence other than the assessment which is carried out by college assessors visiting the salons. There are

missed opportunities to promote links between the training in the college and salons. Information which would encourage links between the training in the college and practice sessions in the salons is not shared. Some trainees ask their employers for help in the development of specific skills to aid their NVQ progress. College staff have little contact with trainees in their salons during the college holidays.

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

### **Grade 4**

31. Yeovil College provides NVQ training in the care of the elderly and in childcare at levels 2 and 3. There are 23 trainees working towards qualifications in the care of the elderly. Of these, 13 are on modern apprenticeships, two are national trainees and eight are on other youth training programmes. There are 33 trainees working towards childcare qualifications at levels 2 and 3. There are eight trainees on modern apprenticeships, one on a national traineeship and 24 on other training programmes for young people. All trainees in care and childcare are female. Trainees are referred to the college by the careers service or enrol directly from school. Trainees on other training are usually placed on the Somerset TEC's careership programme in which the trainees are identified as likely, with additional support, to achieve an NVQ at level 2. All trainees in the care of the elderly have work placements or are employed in nursing homes, residential homes or in residential homes for children with special needs. Childcare trainees have workplaces in nurseries, primary schools or in an independent preparatory school. Trainees attend off-the-job training at Yeovil College for one day each week. College assessors carry out assessments in the workplace. Trainees in care and childcare undertake training in first aid, food hygiene and manual handling. In 1997-98, nine out of 19 trainees who left the care and childcare programmes achieved an NVQ. In 1998-99, 11 out of 27 trainees achieved an NVQ. Retention for this year is above 80 per cent. The inspectors considered the majority of the strengths given in the self-assessment report to be no more than normal practice. They did not find evidence to support a number of weaknesses and additional weaknesses were identified. The inspectors awarded a grade lower than that identified in the self-assessment report.

#### *STRENGTHS*

- ◆ good supervision by occupationally competent staff
- ◆ wide variety of good work placements in childcare
- ◆ effective off-the-job training

#### *WEAKNESSES*

- ◆ limited implementation of key skills in NVQ programme
- ◆ weak assessment practices
- ◆ poor use of evidence for assessment
- ◆ missed opportunities to integrate on- and off-the-job training
- ◆ low achievement rates

32. The employers in care and childcare have a commitment to training at work and to providing a range of training opportunities for trainees. Trainees are well supported in the workplace. They are given good advice and are closely supervised by occupationally qualified staff. Trainees are visited regularly by a training co-ordinator who meets with the trainee and the supervisor to carry out a review of what the trainee is undertaking in the workplace. The co-ordinator competently deals with any pastoral issues which may arise.

33. The trainees in childcare are receiving their training in good working environments which offer a range of opportunities to meet the standards of their NVQ programme. There is a wide variety of work placements which offer training in the care and education of babies and children up to eight years of age. Individual workplaces provide training which enables trainees to work with children of different ages and with different needs. Trainees have a wide range of experiences and opportunities which permit NVQ standards to be met. For example, two trainees were able to assist a teacher of literacy and numeracy at key stage 1. Workplaces in childcare are well resourced. They contain learning materials which offer trainees the opportunity to use a variety of books covering the theoretical aspects of the NVQ. They provide trainees with access to books that offer information and ideas on activities with children of all ages, such as creative music making, storytelling, literacy and numeracy activities.

34. The trainee's personal training plan contains the off-the-job training programme for the year and these topics are linked to a number of NVQ units, such as nutrition and diet for the elderly, for the frail, and for those with diabetes. In childcare there are sessions on topics relating to supporting children's social, emotional and physical development. Trainees value the training and supervisors speak well of the knowledge of the trainees. Training is well structured with practical activities linked to theory. There are good lesson plans and the content of the sessions is closely linked to the knowledge which the trainees need in order to achieve the requisite standard. Although trainees are reviewed every three months by a training co-ordinator, they do not receive a copy of the review. Workplace supervisors contribute to this process, but as the review and assessment processes are undertaken by different people and copies of the review are not available, the assessment and review are not co-ordinated and, therefore, do not inform the trainees' personal training plan.

35. A key skills booklet has been issued to the trainees. Key skills are not integrated into the NVQ programme and, with the exception of information technology, have not been implemented. Trainees expressed dissatisfaction with previous information technology sessions, which had been disrupted by changes in staffing. Some supervisors and employers stated that they had little knowledge about the content and purpose of key skills and how they related to the trainees' training programme. Planning for the integration and teaching of key skills is in progress and relevant staff are studying for the key skills practitioner award.

36. Qualified college assessors undertake assessment in the workplace. A number of work placements did have a qualified work-based assessor but they did not

assess trainees. There is infrequent assessment and although placement supervisors are involved in supporting the trainees' training, opportunities are missed to involve them in assessment. Opportunities are also missed for the supervisors to assist in confirming evidence, such as providing witness testimonies. Most trainees who had been on the programme for five months since September 1999 had not completed one unit. There was some dissatisfaction by trainees and supervisors concerning the infrequency of the opportunities for assessment. Trainees were unsure of what an assessment plan was, or how it should be used to identify their opportunities for collecting evidence and plans for future assessments. One assessor had recently begun to use the assessment plan and the feedback sheet in the NVQ logbook. Assessors usually see trainees in the college and discuss their progress. Only when they consider that a complete unit is ready to be assessed do they normally visit the workplace. There have been recent changes to the frequency of the internal verification process, whereby internal verification is to take place following the assessment of three units. The variations in the assessment practices and the infrequency of assessment have contributed to on the slow progress of the trainees in completing NVQ units.

37. There are examples of direct observation being undertaken by the assessor and of assignments which are being used as evidence. However, some evidence is little more than a description of a task or activity which has been undertaken in the workplace, with few evaluative comments from the assessor on the performance of the trainee in carrying out the tasks. There is little purpose in the collection of some of the evidence except that it may become useful at a later stage. There is a limited attempt to link the evidence to the performance criteria. This is left to the trainees, many of whom on the NVQ at level 2 find this task difficult and confusing. Evidence is not always signed and dated to ensure its authenticity.

38. Some supervisors and employers expressed dissatisfaction that there was a lack of information about the trainees' work at college. Some supervisors and employers did not have a copy of the NVQ standards and were unaware of what they contained. This lack of awareness meant that opportunities were missed to link the workplace training with the theoretical knowledge that was being covered in the college.

39. Clear data on retention and achievement are not readily available to the staff, and unreliable data are given to management. From close analysis of enrolments and individual achievements, the overall achievement rates in 1997-98 were 80 per cent for childcare, and 52 per cent for care. For 1998-99 the rates were 55 per cent for childcare and 24 per cent for care. Both sectors show low achievements and a declining trend. Figures for 1999-2000 are not yet available.

## GENERIC AREAS

### Equal opportunities

**Grade 4**

40. The college has written equal opportunity policies for both staff and students. The strategic plan includes priorities for widening the participation of trainees, combating social exclusion and a commitment to lifelong learning. There is a 'an inclusive learning committee', membership of which includes the principal. Reporting to this committee is an equal opportunity working group which is chaired by the vice principal. There is an action plan for implementing equal opportunity procedures with responsibilities clearly stated. Policies and procedures are reviewed annually by the equal opportunities working group. The college's equal opportunities policy and code of practice are available to staff on the college's computer network and copies are available for staff and students in the study centre. The college charter outlines equal opportunities, rights and responsibilities, learning support and complaints and appeals procedures. Staff profiles reflect the local community which has a minority ethnic population of less than 1 per cent. New staff are given a copy of the policies which include rights to parental leave. The gender balance on work-based training reflects traditional stereotypes. Some action has been taken to address this issue by redesigning the college's prospectuses to provide more images of men and women in non traditional roles. In addition, the college actively participates in the women into science and engineering (WISE) project. The self-assessment report accurately identified the college's commitment to widening participation and equal opportunities. It did not sufficiently recognise the impact on trainees of the college's failure to share good practice with the employers or carry out regular workplace monitoring. The grade awarded by inspectors was lower than that given in the self-assessment report.

#### STRENGTHS

- ◆ innovative developments in widening participation
- ◆ good protection for staff and trainees against discrimination and harassment at college

#### WEAKNESSES

- ◆ no monitoring of equal opportunities in workplace
- ◆ poor understanding by employers and trainees of equal opportunities
- ◆ key staff not trained in equal opportunities

#### **GOOD PRACTICE**

*An open learning programme has been developed in hospitality and catering to widen participation amongst trainees who are unable to attend college on a day-release basis. The trainees are trained and assessed on-the-job by college staff.*

41. Several initiatives are underway to address barriers to learning which are encountered by people living in the area served by the college. One project is designed to raise the profile of women in engineering by using work-based trainees to help with marketing at schools' careers events. Female engineering students are linked with women mentors from the engineering industry who provide support, encouragement and advice. Female engineering tutors provide positive role models



in college and one of the major employers has a female engineering trainer. Another project is the opening of a free drop-in computer skills workshop in Yeovil to widen participation among under-represented groups. European funding has been obtained to support women wishing to retrain and return to work. The college is encouraging access to courses for people from rural areas through the provision of transport, open learning and outreach centres. There is good access for student with disabilities to the majority of the college's areas. One section of business administration is on a first floor which is inaccessible to wheelchairs. A lift is proposed in the college's plan.

42. Policies and procedures are in place to protect staff and trainees against discrimination and harassment. The procedures clearly explain what constitutes unacceptable behaviour and how to gain access to the complaints and grievance procedures. They were used recently in a case of suspected racial harassment after a fight in the college's grounds. A small number of employers also have such policies. The college responds promptly to complaints. The complaints procedure specifies that an acknowledgement of a complaint must be sent within five days, an investigation carried out within 15 days and a reply sent. The quality committee monitors complaints, including those concerned with equal opportunities. Action plans are drawn up to address issues as necessary.

43. There is no mention of equal opportunities in the employers' contracts with the college. College staff do not check for employers commitment to equal opportunities or monitor the workplace regularly. For example, inappropriate posters are displayed in some workplaces and action is only taken if a trainee brings them to the notice of the training co-ordinator. Some college marketing and recruitment materials do not contain equal opportunity statements.

44. There is generally poor understanding by employers and trainees of equal opportunity issues. College staff do not take the opportunity of visits to the workplace to share the good practice of the college and to raise employers' and trainees' awareness. The TEC's form for the employer to use for the induction of the trainees contains no mention of equal opportunities. Induction practices vary across the occupational areas. For example, whereas in the course handbook for care trainees the policies and procedures relating to equal opportunities, discrimination, harassment, grievance and assessment appeals are all clearly outlined, there is no mention of equal opportunities in the course handbook for hospitality trainees.

45. Training co-ordinators are the key people liaising with the employer, yet they have not received training in equal opportunities. Some college trainers have also not been trained. A programme of staff development is planned for the near future.

### **Trainee support**

### **Grade 4**

46. Trainees are recruited either by referral from the careers service or directly from employers. Potential trainees are made aware of training opportunities through

marketing literature and attendance by the college at local careers events. Vocational 'taster' courses are run each spring to enable young people to sample career options. Trainees are referred to suitable employers following individual interviews with college staff. Many local employers regularly employ trainees. New placements are checked to make sure they provide suitable opportunities for training and assessment and comply with health and safety requirements. All trainees follow a standard induction programme for off-the job training. Basic skills screening has been introduced in all occupational areas this year. Additional support in key skills is available in the study centre. Training co-ordinators in each occupational area carry out reviews. Counselling, financial advice and careers advice and guidance are available to trainees on the main college campus. The self-assessment report identified strengths and weaknesses which inspectors regarded as no more than normal practice. Inspectors identified additional strengths and weaknesses and awarded a lower grade than that given in the self-assessment report.

#### *STRENGTHS*

- ◆ systematic and rigorous recruitment arrangements
- ◆ comprehensive induction to off-the-job training

#### *WEAKNESSES*

- ◆ no systematic initial assessment of key skills
- ◆ inconsistent approaches to identifying additional support
- ◆ weak reviews of trainees' progress
- ◆ poor use of training plans to monitor trainees' progress

47. Arrangements for the recruitment of trainees are good. Most trainees are referred to the college by the Somerset careers service. Some employers approach the college after employing a trainee. Young people are made aware of work-based training opportunities through marketing literature and attendance by the college at careers events arranged by local schools and Somerset Careers. A separate prospectus has been produced to promote work-based training; this is informative and attractively produced. Vocational 'taster' courses are held each spring to enable young people to sample career options. Trainees feel that these are valuable in helping them make career choices. Trainees are referred to suitable employers following individual interviews with the college. In care, parents are involved in the interview process. The college maintains a list of suitable employers who regularly employ trainees. The quality of work placements is high. New placements are checked to make sure they provide suitable opportunities for training and assessment and comply with health and safety requirements.

48. Induction to off-the-job training is thorough and comprehensive. A standard induction programme is followed across all occupational areas. Trainees are given relevant information about facilities and services available at the college and

specific information about their programme. Additional induction is provided at each stage of the programme. Trainees and employers complete a standard workplace induction checklist provided by the TEC. In some areas the training co-ordinator is involved in carrying out induction training in the workplace. Information provided at induction helps trainees settle in quickly to the programme. While on training programmes all support services provided by the college are available to trainees, but access to these is limited for those attending the college for only one day a week or less.

49. Screening using the a national organisation's initial assessment system, is a contractual requirement for all trainees. Engineering trainees are rigorously screened and well supported. In other areas basic skills screening has been introduced this year for trainees on NVQ programmes at level 2 who achieve lower than grade C in GCSE maths and English, in line with college policy. The outcome of initial assessment is fed back to trainees only when the results identify that support may be needed. A drop-in facility for basic skills support is available in the learning link centre on the main college campus for two hours each day. Access to this resource can be difficult for some trainees due to the time of the college's vocational programmes.

50. The learning support needs of trainees with specific learning difficulties or disabilities are identified in different ways. Some trainees' needs are identified by the trainees themselves or by the careers service. Sometimes needs are identified once the trainee has started a programme. Once needs have been identified, internal procedures to apply for support and associated funding can lead to delays in the support being provided.

51. Trainees' key skills are not systematically assessed at the start of the programme, although achievement on previous courses is taken into account when drawing up training plans. In some occupational areas work on key skills starts late in the programme. Trainees are unsure how key skills fit into their programme and how they should collect evidence. Some trainees are nearing the end of their programme with little progress having been made. The key skills centre at the college is providing support for trainees on a drop-in-basis. Fifteen trainees are using this facility during the day and in the evenings in order to gather evidence and assemble portfolios. Key skills sessions are not systematically included in off-the-job training. Recently introduced reports on trainees' progress in off-the-job training do not include a section on their progress in key skills.

52. The frequency of trainees' reviews meets or exceeds contractual requirements. The focus of the reviews is on general progress and on the identification of any problems the trainee or the employer may have. The reviews do not adequately guide the trainees in the progress they need to make towards achievement of the NVQ and other qualifications. Trainees are not set clear short term achievement targets and many are unsure about what stage of the programme they have reached, or what they have to do next. They are not given clear guidance on how to make use of the opportunities available in the workplace to collect evidence towards the NVQ. Employers are not actively involved in the review

process and copies of the review are not given to either the trainee or the employer. Employers do not have a clear picture of the trainees' progress towards gaining an NVQ. Training plans are not regularly updated or used to support the training process. Short and medium term training and assessment targets are not set. This does not encourage trainees to progress and leads to the slow achievement of qualifications by many trainees.

### **Management of training**

### **Grade 3**

53. Work-based training within the college is managed from the business development unit. It is headed by one of the assistant principals who sits on the senior management team and reports directly to the principal. The business development manager has responsibility for the management of the training co-ordinators. They are located within subject areas within each of the occupational areas which offer government-funded training schemes. The business development manager monitors the actions of the training co-ordinators and reports back to their line managers with any concerns. The training co-ordinators carry out reviews of all the trainees within their areas and organise placements and NVQ schemes relevant to the employer. College staff within each area manages assessment, except in the case of a major employer where the college subcontracts this function. Many policies and procedures apply to the whole college and extend to all staff, students and trainees. A particular procedure, which is applied by the business development manager, covers specifically the arrangements for work-based training. The college gained the Investors in People standard in December 1999. Inspectors agreed with most of the significant strengths and weaknesses in the self-assessment report and awarded the same grade as that given in the report.

#### *STRENGTHS*

- ◆ relevant and effective staff development programme
- ◆ responsive to local employers' needs
- ◆ good understanding and support of college's values and policies by staff
- ◆ good internal communications

#### *WEAKNESSES*

- ◆ weak target-setting for courses
- ◆ ineffective use of management information
- ◆ unsystematic management of assessment

54. Staff receive rigorous annual appraisals from their line manager and actively contribute to the process. There is an interim review. Staff development is designed to meet the strategic and operational needs of the college and is responsive to personal goals if they are relevant. During the appraisal staff development needs

are discussed and referred to the staff development officer. Staff benefit from a significant investment in their development. The training offered is highly relevant to their employment and often directly benefits trainees. Recent training for training co-ordinators has included health and safety, key skills, accreditation of prior learning, internal verifier awards and assessment. There is a staff development plan which tracks achievements and identifies training still to be completed.

55. There is a range of links with the local community which give a strategic steer to the college. At principal level a meeting is held twice a year with four major employers in the area to discuss employment trends. The meeting includes a range of staff from the college. For engineering, the major area for work based training, there is an advisory committee comprising college members and representatives from 12 employers in the area. Care also benefits from a similar committee. This leads to an effective needs analysis for the college which is cascaded down to curriculum areas in order to identify where new courses need to be introduced or existing ones modified.

56. The college has a range of published procedures which are readily available and form the basis of the college's operations. The policies are working documents and staff refer to them regularly. Staff understand and acknowledge their value and relevance to the work of the college. The college has developed a particular set of procedures for work-based training. These are plainly worded and form the basis of the training.

57. There are effective internal communications. At least once a month the training co-ordinators for work-based training across the college meet, and the business development manager chairs the meeting. Minutes and actions points are recorded, good practice is shared and the meeting is an effective forum for problems to be discussed. This process has led to good progress being made in the management of training. There is one training co-ordinator for each area who is located in close proximity to the staff who carry out the training. Communications within the curriculum areas are good. In engineering and care the training co-ordinator to trainee ratio is high, with ratios of 1:160 and 1:56 respectively. In engineering external communications are particularly good. Employers can readily contact staff at the college and feel that their needs are dealt with at both a strategic and practical level. Many employers comment that the college is meeting the needs of their business and that the courses are appropriate. The college actively develops its public relations and attracts significant interest in the local press. There are no service level agreements between the business development manager and the curriculum areas with the result that there is no monitoring of performance standards against targets.

58. Although the college has impressive arrangements which enable it to identify strategic direction and analyse the market, these only result in general targets for course numbers. No detailed or specific targets are set relating to recruitment to a particular course so as to meet the carefully analysed requirements of local employers.

59. The management information system currently used for work-based training does not clearly identify key data and is not completely familiar to staff. Staff have little confidence in it. Some curriculum areas have their own systems to record trainees' details and these data are not readily accessible to the business development manager. Achievement, retention and other data are difficult to produce in many cases.

60. The assessment of NVQs, unlike the review and co-ordination of trainees, is managed individually within the separate curriculum areas, and the business development manager has no responsibility for it. Across the college there are variations in assessment practices. Common standards have not been established and infrequent assessment is contributing to the trainees' slow progress. Assessors do not meet to share good practice.

### Quality assurance

### Grade 3

61. Yeovil College revised and re-issued its comprehensive quality framework in December 1999. The purpose of the framework is to improve quality by establishing standards and monitoring performance. Quality systems are to be reviewed each year to ensure continuous improvement. The business development unit, which has responsibility for TEC-funded trainees, devised quality procedures for the work-based training programmes. As these policies and procedures have only recently been introduced, the college has had little time to evaluate fully their impact on the quality of training. The overall monitoring of quality assurance is the responsibility of the academic board's quality committee. The implementation of the quality procedures within the college is devolved to the quality manager. The designated manager for TEC-funded trainees is located within the business development unit. Inspectors agreed with some strengths and weaknesses in the self-assessment report and identified others. The grade awarded was the same as that given by the college in the self-assessment report.

#### *STRENGTHS*

- ◆ good evaluation of and response to employers' opinions
- ◆ effective programme reviews

#### *WEAKNESSES*

- ◆ an absence of targets
- ◆ no systematic use of data
- ◆ inconsistent internal verification procedures

62. The training co-ordinators work closely with their curriculum area manager and the business development manager. Fortnightly meetings are held between the business development manager and the co-ordinators. These are well recorded and action points are noted. The recent focus of attention of this group has been on the

development of training programmes and their continuous improvement. Recent developments have been the production of the employers' handbook and trainees' questionnaires.

63. The college has introduced surveys of employers' views on the quality of training programmes. A 40 per cent return was achieved to these questionnaires. Responses clearly identified areas of concern. These included the need for more information for employers and a higher level of contact between employers and college staff to support training in the workplace. Actions, as a result of the surveys, have been identified with target dates for their achievement. Surveys of trainees' views on the quality of the programmes have also been introduced. The results are relayed to the staff in the curriculum areas. A college prospectus has been written specifically for the training programmes, as has an employers' handbook.

64. The quality assurance process incorporates the reviews programmes which are carried out at times throughout the training programmes by the curriculum areas. These reviews highlight aspects of programmes which need to be revised and define specific outcomes which have to be achieved by the curriculum areas.

65. The quality manager contributes to staff development and produces a report for to the quality committee. The college's observations of off-the-job training are clearly recorded, evaluated and contribute to programme development. The report produced for each curriculum area on observations was self-critical and identified development needs as well as commenting on the training environment.

66. Targets for the retention of trainees and their achievements have not been set. Trends cannot be monitored or analysed. The destinations of trainees are recorded, but there is little use of data in the evaluation of programmes

67. The quality manager is responsible for the internal verification procedures. Verification includes yearly observations of assessors but to date these have not been rigorously applied. Internal verification procedures are inconsistently applied across the college. New verification procedures have been introduced within care after a recent external verifier's visit. The vice-principal reviews external verifier reports and notifies the appropriate curriculum area of any action which needs to be taken.

68. The self-assessment report was the first to apply specifically to TEC-funded trainees within the college. It contained strengths and weaknesses as perceived by them. The procedures for compiling the report were clear and were agreed between the quality manager and curriculum areas. Staff were involved in the writing of the self-assessment reports and attended development days as part of the process. Curriculum areas produce assessment reports which identify their strengths and weaknesses and include an action plan for their improvement. Inspectors found that some strengths were no more than normal practice. Additional strengths and weaknesses were identified. The grades which the college gave in the report were confirmed for engineering, hospitality, hairdressing,



management of training and quality assurance. Inspectors awarded a higher grade than the college gave in the report for business and awarded a lower grade than that given by the college for care, equal opportunities and trainee support.