



TRAINING STANDARDS COUNCIL

INSPECTION REPORT JANUARY 1999

REINSPECTION MARCH 2000

Hugh Baird College

SUMMARY

Hugh Baird College offers good off-the-job training programmes in each of its occupational areas. Facilities and resources are excellent. Hairdressing programmes are well co-ordinated and include effective on- and off-the-job training opportunities. Hairdressing tutors make regular visits to employers and monitor and review trainees' progress at work. Construction and engineering programmes are satisfactory. The college has a strong commitment to equal opportunities, but this does not extend to the workplace. Co-ordination of on- and off-the-job training is sound, and college lecturers make regular visits to the workplace. Employers in construction and engineering do not participate in target setting for trainees. Health and safety practices on construction and engineering employers' premises are not appraised effectively or monitored regularly. The college has a comprehensive quality assurance system.

As a result of the reinspection of Hugh Baird College, the original published text for construction, management of training and quality assurance has been replaced by new text which makes reference to the original inspection findings. This summary page, the overall report introduction and the inspection findings introduction have also been amended to reflect the findings of the reinspection. All other sections of the original published report which have not been subject to full reinspection have been left in their original form.

GRADES

OCCUPATIONAL AREAS	GRADE
Construction	4
Engineering	3
Hair & beauty	1

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

REINSPECTION	GRADE
Construction	3

REINSPECTION	GRADE
Management of training	3
Quality assurance	2

KEY STRENGTHS

- ◆ personal tutors guide and review trainees' progress and welfare
- ◆ staff working groups address gender and ethnicity issues
- ◆ key skills fully integrated into occupational programmes
- ◆ excellent facilities and resources
- ◆ varied, interesting and well-documented hairdressing training sessions
- ◆ good access to college sites for those with mobility problems
- ◆ comprehensive quality assurance system for the whole college



KEY WEAKNESSES

- ◆ poor monitoring of health and safety practices in construction and engineering workplaces
- ◆ failure to involve employers in construction and engineering in trainees' target-setting

INTRODUCTION

1. Hugh Baird College is situated in Bootle in the south of the borough of Sefton, Merseyside. The college operates from four sites, on one central campus. In addition, it operates from a business centre located in the Triad Complex, situated at the heart of Bootle's commercial accommodation, less than a mile from the main Balliol campus. The college manages its curriculum through 11 schools and has over 2,400 full- and 6,000 part-time students, funded wholly or partly by the Further Education Funding Council (FEFC). In addition, there are 107 full- and 133 part-time students funded for higher education programmes and 1,298 part-time students, whose training is funded from sources other than the FEFC. While 75 per cent of its income is provided by the FEFC, the college also benefits from a substantial, but declining, annual income from the European Social Fund (ESF). In addition, over 5 per cent of its income is generated by commercial operations, and significant funds are provided through contracts with external organisations, such as New Deal through the Employment Service and work for the Construction Industry Training Board (CITB). Inspection and reinspection covered the college's trainees on programmes funded through Merseyside Training and Enterprise Council (TEC). These programmes are offered in agriculture, construction, engineering, business administration and hairdressing. At the time of inspection, and during the subsequent reinspection, the college had over 50 trainees working towards national vocational qualifications (NVQs) at levels 2 and 3 and additional qualifications on modern apprenticeship programmes or national certificates. At the time of reinspection, six trainees are on the Future programme (the local brand name for other work-based training programmes for young people) and six are national trainees and 48 are modern apprentices. All trainees are employed by companies in Sefton, Liverpool and surrounding areas.

2. The college's mission is to provide a high quality of education, training, counselling and pastoral care. An extensive selection of courses is provided for full- and part-time day and evening students from entry level to level 5. These include prevocational, general certificate of secondary education (GCSE) and general certificate of education (GCE) A level courses, adult basic education, access to higher education and a wide range of vocational training.

3. Merseyside has been granted funding by the European Union from the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF) and the European Social Fund (ESF) because of the region's persistently high levels of poverty, unemployment and social deprivation. In 1999, unemployment in the Merseyside TEC area stood at 10.5 per cent, compared with 5.7 per cent in the Northwest of England and 5 per cent for the whole of Great Britain. The unemployment rate across Sefton varies widely. Unemployment is more acute in the south of the borough: for example, the rate for the Bootle parliamentary constituency is very high, at 14.2 per cent, compared with 6.7 per cent and 6.6 per cent for the Southport and Crosby constituencies, respectively. The most striking difference between employment in Bootle and that

of the rest of the country is the very high number of clerical and secretarial staff, almost twice the national average. However, while service sector businesses (excluding public service) make up over half of all employers in Bootle, they provide just over a third of jobs, owing to the small size of many service firms. Another characteristic feature of the local economy is that Bootle's organisations employ many local people, and more than two-fifths of employers have 80 per cent or more of their staff living within five miles of their place of employment.

4. The findings of independent market research commissioned in November 1999 show that the population in the college's main recruitment area is 310,200 from 119,800 households. In 1991 (at the time of the last Census) the area's age profile had above average proportions of under-15s and slightly higher than average proportions of retired residents.

5. Although the borough-wide figures for achievement for Sefton schools are well above the national average, achievement in south Sefton is poor. The number of school leavers achieving five or more GCSEs at grade C and above in the four Bootle and Litherland secondary schools was between 18 and 26 per cent, compared with the national average of 46.3 per cent for 1998. This had increased by only around 2 per cent in 1999, compared with the national average of 47.9 per cent. Post-16 participation rates in the Bootle and Litherland areas are also significantly below the borough average.

6. Since all further education colleges were incorporated in 1993, the college has grown by over 24 per cent, despite a high level of local competition. In a 20-mile radius from the centre of Bootle, there are three sixth form colleges and five general further education colleges. There are over 30 schools with sixth forms in Sefton and Liverpool. Seventy-one per cent of college students are drawn from the most deprived local areas in England, and the college is categorised by the FEFC as an institution which draws a significant number of its students from areas of very high deprivation. It also attracts a significant percentage of its students from the more prosperous areas of Crosby and Maghull and some from Formby and Southport.

INSPECTION FINDINGS

7. Hugh Baird College produced its annual self-assessment report, on all its work, in September 1998, in preparation for the subsequent inspection by FEFC. Following attendance at an awareness-training session for nominees held by the Training Standards Council, an additional supplement was prepared to complement the college's self-assessment report. The reports focused wholly on the learning experience in college. The grades reflected the quality of the learning programmes, support and management systems in the college. Weaknesses were not addressed in relation to the on- and off-the-job training links, work-based support, management of training and quality assurance. The inspection grades awarded for construction, management of training and quality assurance are lower than those given in the self-assessment report. The findings from the first inspection were discussed by the college's senior management, and a sub-committee of the college's NVQ panel was set up to address the weaknesses identified, and to share the good practice found in some occupational areas. All college staff were given the opportunity to participate in action planning, through regular team meetings. Key members of staff attended external training events.

8. A team of four inspectors spent a total of 11 days at Hugh Baird College during January 1999. Inspection covered the occupational areas of construction, engineering and hairdressing. Floristry and business administration were not inspected owing to the low number of trainees on programme at the time. Inspectors met staff from the college, including managers, tutors and administrators and representatives of Merseyside TEC. They visited two college sites where the occupational learning was based for all the programmes inspected. They observed three learning sessions and observed support sessions held in the college and in the workplace. Inspectors met 21 college staff, including middle and senior managers. They examined trainees' files, training plans, assessment records and portfolios and other documents about training and its management. Inspectors interviewed 24 trainees in a variety of situations, both in the college and at the workplace. They visited 12 employers' premises and met 14 employers' staff.

9. For the reinspection in March 2000, a team of three inspectors spent a total of six days at the college. They visited five work placements, and interviewed 11 trainees, eight work-based supervisors and nine members of the college's staff. They examined a range of documents, including contracts, trainees and employers' files, course management files, audit information, and quality assurance manuals.

OCCUPATIONAL AREAS

Construction

Grade 3

10. There are four trainees in this area at the time of reinspection. One trainee is working towards an NVQ in wood occupations at level 2. The other three trainees are following a college course leading to a qualification in building studies. The number of trainees has fallen significantly since the original inspection. The college retains its TEC contracts for construction and also works as a subcontractor for the CITB. This subcontracted work was not included in the reinspection. Trainees attend the college on a day-release basis and their classes extend to the evening. Employers vary from small, local companies to large national organisations. Eight members of staff are involved in the construction training; three are full-time and five are part-time staff. All full-time staff are qualified assessors and one is a qualified internal verifier.

At the first inspection, the main weaknesses identified were.

- ◆ poor achievement rates
- ◆ no link between on- and off-the-job training
- ◆ poor communication between college staff and employers
- ◆ missed opportunities to gather assessment evidence from the workplace
- ◆ insufficient staff in the electrical department
- ◆ personal development plans are not updated
- ◆ some trainees are unaware of what programme they are on

11. During reinspection, inspectors found that all these weaknesses had been addressed to a substantial degree..

STRENGTHS

- ◆ high quality, purpose-built training accommodation
- ◆ well-organised training and assessment

WEAKNESSES

- ◆ no individual training plans for work-based trainees
- ◆ too few trainees to evaluate the extent of improvements

12. Construction training takes place in purpose-built workshops situated in the technology faculty. These are spacious and well laid out. They are equipped with a wide range of industry standard machinery which enables the trainees to develop the requisite NVQ competencies. Experienced staff run well-planned training sessions. Daily timetables are structured to include a variety of practical and theoretical sessions. Trainees have access to a wide range of textbooks and to the

occupational area information in the college library and learning centre. Learning resources are clearly referenced to individual NVQ units, and trainees can obtain relevant information quickly and easily. Trainers also use checklists to monitor the progress of individual trainees and identify those who require additional support in the form of individual training sessions. Training programmes leading to NVQs in construction are arranged in three 10-week modules which are based on the achievement of specific NVQ units and elements. In 1996-97 and 1997-98, the numbers of trainees on training programmes were 11 and 19, respectively. Only 40 per cent successfully completed the programme in each of those years. In 1998-99, the trainees' achievement rate improved to 57 per cent.

13. During the first inspection, there was little co-ordination between the on- and off-the-job elements of training. Communication between college staff and employers was poor, there was little workplace assessment. Employers were not asked to sign a training agreement. They were not given information about the content of the training programme. Assessors now demonstrate a flexible and well-organised approach to workplace assessment. Site visits are planned weekly to provide trainees with plenty of opportunities for assessment. The college has produced training plans which describe the range of activities to be covered for each NVQ unit. These are easy to follow, and allow both the trainee and employer to identify where assessment opportunities exist within the work programme. A new work-based training file guides employers through the NVQ standards and helps them to assist trainees in developing and practising the skills learned at college. Employers' understanding of the NVQ, and of their role and responsibilities with regard to assessment, has improved. Records of trainees' progress reviews include assessment results. During the reviews, trainees are set targets to be attained by the time of the next review.

14. The first inspection found that some trainees were unaware that they were on a work-based training programme, and unclear about their training framework. Trainees' individual training plans were not updated. Now trainees demonstrate a clear understanding of their programme, and the one trainee still following a work-based route was able accurately to describe key aspects of the NVQ process, including progress reviews, assessment and key skills. However, this trainee still does not have an individual training plan.

15. A further weakness identified in the first inspection related to insufficient staffing in the electrical installation department caused by the long-term sickness of a tutor. Although there are no longer any trainees in electrical installation, problems with staffing have now been addressed. The absent member of staff is now back at work. In addition, the college has made a commitment to recruit an additional member of staff should numbers of trainees make this necessary in the future.

Engineering

Grade 3

16. There are currently three trainees on the construction plant maintenance

programme and nine trainees on the motor-vehicle programme. Hugh Baird College delivers engineering work-based training to NVQ levels 2 and 3 in these two areas. All trainees are employed modern apprentices. Formal training and assessment take place at the college, with trainees attending on a day-release or block-release basis. This is the first year which the college has offered engineering programmes funded by Merseyside TEC. Trainees currently on programme are recruited from relevant full-time college courses, with initial assessment being an integral part of induction at that stage. Inspectors agreed with some of the strengths and weaknesses identified in the self-assessment report, but identified additional weaknesses. Inspectors awarded the same grade as that proposed by the college in its self-assessment report.

STRENGTHS

- ◆ excellent training facilities in college workshops
- ◆ key skills carefully integrated in occupational programmes

WEAKNESSES

- ◆ weak communication between college and employers
- ◆ training plans not updated to recognise achievement
- ◆ poor knowledge and understanding of NVQ by employers

17. Teaching staff are well qualified and have good industrial experience. College training facilities and accommodation are excellent. Training workshops are equipped with a wide range of occupational machinery and equipment. There is a well-stocked college library. Trainees have access to a wide range of occupationally specific reference books and trade magazines. Training sessions are well planned and relevant to trainees and employers' needs. However, theory sessions are not planned to complement trainees' increasing experience at work.

18. Key skills training and assessment are an integral part of the occupational training programme. Key skills and occupational evidence are gathered and assessed together, wherever possible. Supporting projects and assignments are used to gather key skills evidence, where it does not easily fit occupational standards. Trainees' key skills entry levels are set from initial assessment tests' results. Trainees are encouraged to progress to key skills awards at higher levels.

19. Trainees' individual training plans are poor. No target dates are set for the achievement of units or of the whole qualification. Co-ordination of training and assessment activities between college staff and employers is poor, although job cards and witness statements are collected at work, many other opportunities to reinforce working procedures are missed. Trainers do not complete any assessment in the workplace. Employers do not understand NVQs, the assessment process or the modern apprenticeship framework. College staff carry out informal checks of

prospective employers' premises for training opportunities and safety. Staff visits to monitor trainees at work are informal and irregular. College staff do not involve employers in the review process. Copies of college progress reviews are sent to employers via trainees.

Hair & beauty

Grade 1

20. There are 10 young people on the hairdressing programme. Trainees are working towards NVQs at level 2 and 3 and additional skills units, as part of their modern apprenticeship programme. Trainees spend four days each week in employers' salons and the fifth day in the training salon at the college. Training sessions are well structured and there are comprehensive schemes of work. Inspectors agreed with the strengths and weaknesses identified in the self-assessment report and awarded the same grade as that proposed by the college.

GOOD PRACTICE

The Leonardo initiative is used to offer a transnational exchange placement to all modern apprentices. Trainees receive language support before going on placement. NVQ documents have been reproduced in other languages. Assessment takes place while trainees are on placement. Assessment is conducted in the language of the country in which trainees are working.

STRENGTHS

- ◆ key skills carefully assessed in a fully integrated training programme
- ◆ well-developed flexible learning packages
- ◆ trainees have good understanding of the assessment process
- ◆ well-managed commercially run training salons
- ◆ varied, interesting and well documented training sessions
- ◆ individual training needs fully catered for
- ◆ European dimension to training

WEAKNESSES

- ◆ lack of employers' involvement in salon reviews

21. Key skills are an integral part of the occupational work. Information technology activity packs have been designed specifically for hairdressing trainees to improve their keyboarding skills in an occupational context. Trainees have a thorough knowledge and understanding of key skills. Results gathered from initial assessment testing are used to identify the key skills entry level. All trainees complete the information technology key skills unit which is additional to the hairdressing modern apprenticeship standards. Trainees are encouraged to further develop their key skills through progression to higher levels.

22. Carefully planned theory and practical sessions use a range of flexible learning packages, which enables trainees to acquire relevant theoretical knowledge, while completing practical tasks. Training and assessment activities are systematically planned and effectively managed to use real work activities in the salon environment. Assessment is fair and rigorous. Trainees understand the assessment process and are well motivated to achieve targets.

23. The college's training salons are effectively managed on a commercial basis. The training salons are open from 9am to 9pm to allow flexible attendance. Trainees select the relevant sessions and attendance times to meet their own training needs. They have access to a wide range of models to enable them to develop skills and knowledge in a realistic professional environment. Training sessions are varied, interesting and well developed. Instruction sessions are lively and relevant. Good use is made of question-and-answer techniques to share information and to check trainees' understanding. Consideration is given to individuals' learning abilities, the more able trainees being encouraged to attend advanced practical sessions. This allows trainees to progress more quickly through programmes. College staff are required to work in commercial salon placements during the summer break, to keep abreast of ever-changing styles and techniques.

24. Employers are generally well informed about the requirements of the programme. However, there are few workplace assessors in the salons. Employers have limited knowledge of the assessor qualification; all are interested in achieving the award and taking part in the off-the-job assessment of their trainees. College staff complete regular progress reviews in the salons. Information on trainees' progress is collected from employers during visits by the trainees' personal tutor, but college staff do not otherwise formally involve employers in the review process. Of those trainees who complete their programme, 90 per cent achieve NVQs and gain employment.

GENERIC AREAS

Equal opportunities

Grade 2

25. The college takes its commitment to equal opportunities seriously. A comprehensive equal opportunities policy and procedures are issued to all staff and students during induction. The equal opportunities committee meets regularly to review the implementation of the policy. Quality review team meetings have contributed to the preparation of a detailed action plan to address the widening of the policy. An inclusive learning policy has also addressed the need to plan and support individual students' learning needs. There is good access to all college buildings for wheelchair-users. Inspectors confirmed many of the strengths and weaknesses detailed in the self-assessment report.

STRENGTHS

- ◆ comprehensive policies and procedures reviewed regularly
- ◆ detailed action plans used to address equal opportunities issues
- ◆ good access to college sites for those with mobility difficulties

- ◆ well-informed staff committed to equality of opportunity
- ◆ staff working groups address gender and ethnicity issues

WEAKNESSES

- ◆ no monitoring of employers' equal opportunities policy in construction and engineering
- ◆ targets not set to monitor equal opportunities objectively

26. The equal opportunities policy is communicated to all students, staff and visitors. College induction sessions carefully inform all students and staff about the college's policy and their personal responsibilities. Student handbooks are provided to all students, with a summary of the equal opportunities policy. A statement is also included in the college's charter and security pass for visitors. There are mechanisms to enable students, customers and staff to complain about harassment or other incidents, which infringe the equal opportunities policy. All students are issued with a personal copy of the harassment and grievance procedures. Staff and managers are well informed by staff development activities which focus on equal opportunity issues and good practice. Staff are positive in their attitude to equal opportunities and their desire to ensure that all students are treated fairly.

27. Equal opportunities are clearly addressed in the college's mission statement and strategic aims. The college's equal opportunities committee includes representatives from every faculty and from business support staff. They determine annual priorities, produce an annual action plan and monitor progress at monthly meetings. One of the college's governors has designated responsibility for overseeing equal opportunities policy and practice. Curriculum quality review team meetings address equal opportunities as a regular agenda item, producing and monitoring action plans for promoting equality. Work is currently being completed to establish statistical targets to enable progress towards equality of opportunity to be monitored objectively.

28. As part of the equal opportunities strategy, staff working groups have been established to look at ethnicity and gender issues. Their brief includes the analysis of statistical information over the last three years and the experiences of the different schools in the college. Existing practices are compared with those of other local colleges and comparisons made from local geographical information. The college is also addressing gender bias in its resources to ensure that library resources, as well as audio-visual resources, offer students and trainees a balanced range of materials. As part of its widening participation strategy, the college is targeting groups already identified as under-represented. This includes unemployed men, women returners, disengaged young people, those recovering from mental illness, ex-offenders and people with multiple learning difficulties.

29. Monitoring of employers' policies and their adherence to equal opportunities is done informally by construction and engineering staff, before the start of placements. In hairdressing, employers are regularly monitored. There is no system or records to ensure that all other employers are monitored regularly. Although data are collected and analysed by the college, it is done for all students; data relating to work-based trainees are not separated out and analysed.

Trainee support

Grade 2

30. Hugh Baird College offers a high level of support for trainees, following a comprehensive induction and assessment process. Trainees are offered additional support, if required, and are monitored throughout their time at the college. All trainees are allocated a personal tutor, responsible for reviewing progress and welfare throughout the programme. Reviews take place three times a year, at the end of each programme module. The recruitment process varies across occupational areas, with engineering and construction trainees transferring from full-time college courses and hairdressing trainees recruited directly to the programme using a full range of agencies and by direct application. The college's self-assessment report gave an accurate view of the strengths of this area which were confirmed by inspectors. Inspectors awarded the same grade as that proposed by the college in its self-assessment report.

STRENGTHS

- ◆ thorough and comprehensive college induction
- ◆ good initial assessment of trainees' needs with access to additional support
- ◆ personal tutors regularly guide and review trainees' progress and welfare
- ◆ tutorial sessions carefully structured to address pastoral issues
- ◆ high level of workplace support for hairdressing trainees

WEAKNESSES

- ◆ no planned workplace support for engineering and construction trainees
- ◆ in reviews, no account taken of trainees' performance in the workplace
- ◆ no account taken of employers' views in engineering and construction trainees' reviews

31. Trainees' induction is comprehensive, covering each stage. Induction activities include the student charter, general introduction to staff, course overview, course details and trainees' learning plans. Initial assessment, including accreditation of prior learning where appropriate, is also a significant feature of induction, enabling staff to identify individual trainees' suitability for work-based training and any additional support which they may need to achieve their NVQ. The college takes steps to meet the learning needs of all trainees, through an inclusive learning policy.

Identified personal tutors support trainees and are responsible for monitoring and reviewing their progress and welfare at college. Trainees are able to access the college counselling and professional guidance services. Ready access is also made available to many external agencies. The college has its own careers service and benefits agency advisory team on the campus. Strong links have been established with the statutory careers service and benefits agency. Trainees are encouraged to seek additional learning support above what is identified in the results of their initial assessment.

32. Five senior tutors are responsible for the activities of teams of personal tutors. Senior and personal tutors have attended training courses to prepare them for their support role. Senior tutors provide information, for management review meetings, from the feedback obtained from their teams of personal tutors.

Management of training

Grade 3

33. The college's TEC unit manages training programmes funded through TEC contracts. The TEC unit was newly established in September 1998 to manage TEC-funded training and New Deal programmes funded by the Employment Service. The unit is managed by the New Deal co-ordinator. Unit staff report to the head of corporate services. The heads of the appropriate college schools manage off-the-job training. TEC-funded trainees join existing classes with other part-time students. Programme staff in each school are responsible for planning individual trainees' training programmes, target-setting, training and assessment and monitoring and reviewing students. Construction and engineering staff report to either the head of school of construction and the built environment or the head of school of engineering technology, both of whom report to the head of faculty of technology. Hairdressing staff report to the head of school of hairdressing, beauty and sports therapy who reports to the head of faculty of business, care and service industries. Heads of faculty report to the deputy principal. The college's NVQ panel meets regularly to discuss issues related to courses leading to NVQs that attract FEFC funding, and work-based training. From September 1999, the remit of the college's NVQ co-ordinator has included work-based training. The college has been accredited with the Investors in People Standard.

At the first inspection, the main weaknesses identified were:

- ◆ no management of on-the-job training in construction and engineering
- ◆ unclear external lines of communications and accountability
- ◆ construction and engineering staff unaware of programme requirements
- ◆ no links between on- and off-the-job training in construction and engineering
- ◆ no effective system to monitor employers' premises for health and safety practice in construction and engineering

34. On reinspection, inspectors found that all but the last of these weaknesses had

been rectified. The management of training has improved and is now satisfactory.

STRENGTHS

- ◆ rigorous and detailed management review
- ◆ extensive staff development opportunities for all staff
- ◆ good induction, with mentor support, for all training staff

WEAKNESSES

- ◆ failure to keep engineering employers informed about trainees' NVQ progress
- ◆ construction and engineering employers lack of involvement in trainees' target-setting
- ◆ no systematic monitoring of construction and engineering employers' health and safety practices

35. The first inspection identified inconsistencies in the management of training across different occupational areas. Hairdressing programmes were very well organised. For example, hairdressing companies were, and continue to be, regularly monitored and appraised by the college's staff. Hairdressing employers are included in the planning of training and are given feedback about trainees regularly. Employers are offered opportunities to work towards their assessor qualification and take an active part in the training process. Formal contracts are exchanged between employers and the hairdressing programme staff, specifying the roles and responsibilities of both parties. During the first inspection, several key weaknesses in the management and organisation of on-the-job training in construction and engineering were identified. There were no contracts between employers and the construction and engineering programme staff. Construction and engineering employers did not know what the NVQ standards were. They did not know the level of the NVQ towards which trainees were working. No check was made to ensure that trainees received an induction to the workplace.

36. Following the first inspection, the role of the college's NVQ panel was extended to include work-based training. The head of faculty of business, care and service industries, whose work-based programmes received good grades during the first inspection, was asked to chair the panel. A sub-committee of the panel was set up to focus specifically on addressing the weaknesses identified during the inspection, and to initiate the sharing of good practice between occupational areas. A set of guidelines for work-based training within the college, based on practices already in use in hairdressing, floristry and business administration, have been written. These set down clear requirements and establish standard documents for work-based training programmes. Employers in all occupational areas are now asked to sign a contract which details their responsibilities, and those of the college. They are also asked to identify a mentor for each trainee, who will act as the first

point of liaison between the college and the workplace.

37. The first inspection found that links between on- and off-the-job training in construction and engineering were poor. Training and assessment related to the NVQ learning programme in the college and not to the activities which trainees complete in the workplace. Tutors did not tell employers what trainees were doing at college or explain how they might assist trainees to practise and improve their skills at work. Trainees and employers are now issued with a schedule which outlines the topics to be covered during each off-the-job training session. Construction and engineering staff visit trainees in the workplace every three or four weeks, on dates prearranged with the employer, and carry out assessments or observations. Mentors are issued with a list of the activities to be undertaken, and are able to prepare trainees for the visit. Mentors are now given clear information about the content and structure of the NVQ, so that they are able to assist trainees in gathering evidence at a steady rate throughout their programme.

38. Employers are positive about the changes which have been made by the college, and value the increased liaison they have with the college's staff. However, construction and engineering employers still have insufficient involvement in some aspects of training. Although they receive progress reports every ten weeks from the college, which provide information about trainees' achievement, motivation and performance off-the-job, construction and engineering mentors are not made fully aware of trainees' progress in completing NVQ units and elements. Although trainees gather some evidence of their attainment in key skills in the workplace, mentors are not involved in this process, and they demonstrate little understanding of key skills. During the first inspection, lack of involvement of employers in progress reviews was cited as a weakness on construction and engineering programmes. Reviews were carried out in college, and employers were not invited to participate in them. Mentors for trainees on construction and engineering programmes are now more involved in the review process. Some mentors join college lecturers in the reviews of trainees' progress. Where it is not possible for them to do so, they are invited to make a comment on the review form, and most do so. All mentors read a record of the progress review, and sign it. However, construction and engineering mentors who participate fully in the review process are not necessarily involved in setting targets for trainees. Targets are set during discussions between trainees and college lecturers, and mentors are informed about them subsequently. Insufficient use is made of mentors' detailed knowledge of the workplace situation, and of trainees' performance in the workplace.

39. The management structure is clearly defined and understood by all staff. Lecturers in construction and engineering have adapted positively to the changes in their working practices, and are now able to see clear benefits from good liaison with employers. The college has made a significant investment, in terms both of time and resources, in taking action to rectify the weaknesses identified during the first inspection. Senior staff, led by the deputy principal, have provided strong management during the period of change. The NVQ co-ordinator has provided help to individual members of staff. Members of staff at the college are encouraged to

take part in a range of staff development activities, both external and in-house. These meet the needs of both the organisation and individual staff members. Employees value the ready availability of staff training, which they consider enhances their personal and professional development, and improves their performance in the workplace. Review of the performance and training needs of staff takes place at regular staff appraisal interviews with line managers. New staff attend a structured induction programme, which includes the allocation of a personal mentor for each new member of staff to provide guidance in the first three months of employment.

40. The college has a comprehensive system of meetings through which staff are both consulted, and kept informed about developments. Heads of faculty and heads of school meet regularly to review each training programme. Agenda items include current class sizes, resource implications, trainees' achievements and retention rates. The review meetings result in the production of an action plan for each programme. The effectiveness of the action plan is taken into account through the self-assessment process. The plan is discussed and updated during regular meetings of the review team.

41. The first inspection identified as a weakness the lack of systematic monitoring of health and safety practices in construction and engineering workplaces. This monitoring process has now been formalised to some extent, but remains inadequate. Before placing a trainee with a construction or engineering employer, college staff complete a one-page form about health and safety practices in the work placement concerned. The information required for this form, however, is not detailed enough to enable college staff to assess the adequacy of the employer's health and safety arrangements. In some cases, lecturers do not complete the form themselves, but allow the employer to do it on their behalf. In such cases, they do not check that the health and safety data provided are correct. Other than this initial appraisal, there is no system for the continuous monitoring of health and safety practices on employers' premises. The college has recognised this as a problem, and have contacted the CITB for advice. The NVQ co-ordinator has arranged a meeting for all work-based staff to discuss health and safety monitoring, but no firm action has yet been taken to improve it.

Quality assurance

Grade 2

42. Quality assurance within the college is overseen by the college's quality assurance panel, which is chaired by the principal. Quality assurance issues relating specifically to NVQs and work-based training are dealt with by an NVQ panel, chaired by a faculty head. A newly formed working group of this panel, the work-based training sub-group, is responsible for the recent development and implementation of guidelines and procedures. The sub-group also deals with quality assurance issues raised by quality review teams and it facilitates the sharing of good practice across programmes. At sector level, review teams carry out action

planning and the effectiveness of this is evaluated through the annual self-assessment report. An NVQ/work-based training co-ordinator oversees the work of these groups and has a key role with regard to communications and internal audits. Inspectors agreed with most of the strengths identified in the updated self-assessment report.

At the first inspection, the main weaknesses identified were.

- ◆ work-based training not systematically quality assured
- ◆ employers' feedback not collected or evaluated
- ◆ good practice not shared across occupational areas
- ◆ no monitoring of the quality of workplace learning in construction and engineering
- ◆ management and quality assurance weaknesses in training programmes not recognised by self-assessment

43. These weaknesses have now been rectified. Quality assurance arrangements are now satisfactory. In particular, arrangements for the sharing of good practice by staff now constitute a strength of the quality assurance system.

STRENGTHS

- ◆ effective and comprehensive quality assurance system
- ◆ systematic and purposeful sharing of good practice
- ◆ good use of performance data
- ◆ particularly effective action planning

WEAKNESSES

- ◆ insufficiently systematic monitoring of on-the-job training
- ◆ lack of systematic liaison between college staff and employers

44. The college has taken radical steps to improve its quality assurance of work-based training. A corporate approach has been adopted, and a new regime implemented, for which there are new guidelines. These guidelines set out new quality assurance procedures involving standardised documents across occupational areas. These documents draw on the good practice identified in the hairdressing programme at the time of the last inspection. Staff in occupational areas have been given flexibility to adapt documents to their specific needs. Their use is monitored effectively through internal audit arrangements.

45. Although work-based training represents a very small part of its total activity, the college is fully committed to ensuring it is subject to good quality assurance and the importance of this is communicated well to staff. The guidelines are effective.

Quality review teams have proved effective. Staff have responded positively to change, new approaches within some areas, and the requirement to share good practice and discuss developments. Following the introduction of the guidelines, retention rates for modern apprentices on some programmes are close to 100 per cent, and the attendance rate at off-the-job training has been over 90 per cent.

46. The sharing of good practice has become a key element in the successful implementation of the guidelines for work based training. Quality review teams have identified examples of good practice, such as the development of an employer's pack in the motor vehicle programme. There are presentations on good practice on the monthly NVQ panel meeting. Good practice is drawn upon from similar programmes in eight other colleges. Staff also learn about good practice through the college's involvement in events and activities run by the Association of Colleges and the Further Education Development Agency. The sharing of good practice has now become an important part of the quality assurance process. Cross-occupational groups convene their own meetings where discussions on good practice form an important aspect of staff development.

47. The first inspection identified the careful monitoring of retention, achievement and attendance rates as a strength. During reinspection it was found that these data are now used effectively to set targets. Data relating to work-based training programmes are now identified separately from other college programmes three times each year, and discussed in detail with schools responsible for programme areas. Meaningful and realistic targets are set for each occupational area.

48. Action planning is a highly effective element of the college's quality assurance arrangements. The recent implementation of a continuous action-planning process has proved an efficient method of dealing with large numbers of action points each with varying timescales for completion. It has enabled staff to form a clearer overview of progress implementing action planning. Additionally, each school develops action plans. These are approved by faculty heads who also monitor their implementation. Prompt action is taken to resolve problems identified through auditing and feedback. Employers have been invited to provide views on the quality of training by responding to a newly developed questionnaire. The co-ordinator for work-based NVQ training has analysed employers' responses. The college intends to seek employers' views annually. The views of trainees are obtained systematically three times a year and they are taken into account when drawing up action plans.

49. There have been substantial improvements in the way that the college involves employers on work-based training programmes. The college's staff make regular visits to employers. These have had a beneficial effect and have led to increased co-operation with construction and engineering employers. Employers now help to identify assessment opportunities, they are better informed about trainees' progress. There are, however, no formal arrangements for the monitoring of on-the-job training. When the college's staff visit the workplace, they observe how mentors help trainees. They do not formally question mentors and provide them with



relevant information. The college's staff deal with any problems with a work placement as these arise. They discuss the problems with the employer concerned and draw up an action plan to resolve them. There is, however, no process whereby the college's staff can liaise systematically with employers to share good practice, develop on-the-job training arrangements and anticipate potential problems in the workplace.

50. The college prepared a supplement to its self-assessment report for the purpose of reinspection, which focused specifically on work-based training. This was written by the deputy principal in consultation with all relevant members of staff. Inspectors agreed with most of the judgements in this updated report. The grade they awarded for management of training, however, was lower than that given by the college.