



TRAINING STANDARDS COUNCIL

INSPECTION REPORT OCTOBER 1998

REINSPECTION FEBRUARY 2000

Halesowen College

SUMMARY

Halesowen College provides good training in care and satisfactory training in administration and engineering. In hospitality, training is less than satisfactory and there is poor internal verification. There is a lack of co-ordination of on- and off-the-job training. Engineering trainees have regular progress reviews and assessments and there are good arrangements for the assessment of key skills in the workplace. There are a small number of trainees in engineering and hospitality. Equal opportunities are effectively promoted. Since the first inspection, the college has restructured the work-based training team to include occupational assessors. The good practice in business administration and care is being shared with engineering and hospitality staff. Communications between college and work-based training staff have improved enormously. Senior management is committed to improving the quality of training and is making good use of feedback from trainees and employers. New quality assurance procedures have not yet been fully developed. The college is implementing an action plan to rectify weaknesses identified through reinspection.

As a result of the reinspection of Halesowen College, the original published report text for engineering, hospitality and quality assurance has been replaced by new text which makes reference to the original inspection findings. This summary page, the overall 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 |
|--------------------------------|-------|
| Engineering | 4 |
| Business administration | 3 |
| Hospitality | 4 |
| Health, care & public services | 2 |

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

| REINSPECTION | GRADE |
|--------------|-------|
| Engineering | 3 |
| Hospitality | 4 |

| REINSPECTION | GRADE |
|-------------------|-------|
| Quality assurance | 3 |



KEY STRENGTHS

- ◆ good-quality advice and guidance
- ◆ good care training
- ◆ effective implementation of equal opportunities
- ◆ good use of role models
- ◆ restructured work-based training team
- ◆ good communication between curriculum and work-based training staff
- ◆ improved quality assurance

KEY WEAKNESSES

- ◆ poor internal verification process on hospitality programmes
- ◆ underdeveloped quality assurance procedures



INTRODUCTION

1. Halesowen College was established as a tertiary college in the West Midlands in 1982. It has 2,350 full- and 6,000 part-time students drawn from Halesowen, Dudley and Sandwell. Students work towards general certificate of education (GCE) A levels, general national vocational qualifications (GNVQs) and a variety of vocational qualifications. The college has held a contract with Dudley Training and Enterprise Council (TEC) for the last seven years. There are currently 101 work-based trainees in engineering, business administration, hospitality and care. Trainees are employed or on work placement with local employers. The college offers modern apprenticeships, national traineeships and the New Deal. The college employs 400 teaching and administrative staff and has two sites in Halesowen.
2. The work-based training team is led by a curriculum quality manager who reports to the director of teaching and learning, who in turn reports to the college executive and the governing body. The team consists of six occupational assessors, an administrator, a claims officer and a work-placement officer. The team is based in the college's information centre and also responds to general enrolment enquiries.
3. In Dudley, unemployment stands at 5 per cent. Twenty per cent of those aged 16 to 18 do not enter education, training or employment. The immediate community served by the college has a working population of 30,000, 72 per cent of which are employed by small- and medium-sized businesses. The principal industries are light manufacturing, warehousing, distribution, financial services, retailing and telecommunications. The number of school leavers achieving five or more general certificates of secondary education (GCSEs) at grade C and above was 43 per cent, compared with the national average of 53 per cent, for 1997.
4. In the Dudley area 4.5 per cent of the local population are from minority ethnic groups. Non-white ethnic groups suffer disproportionately from unemployment and are twice as likely to be unemployed as white people.

INSPECTION FINDINGS

5. Halesowen College produced its first self-assessment report in August 1998. Staff from each programme area identified individual strengths and weaknesses which were then compiled into a joint report for all vocational areas. The report did not identify important weaknesses in engineering, hospitality and quality assurance and inspectors awarded lower grades than those given in these areas. Halesowen College produced an updated action plan in January 2000. The plan was based on the action plan submitted after the original inspection. Development of the updated action plan involved assessors, curriculum leaders, the work-based training team, a curriculum quality manager and an assistant principal. The plan was co-ordinated and written by a curriculum quality manager for work-based training.

6. During the first inspection, six inspectors spent a total of 24 days at the college, interviewing 56 trainees, 29 staff and 29 employers and reviewing paper-based evidence. Two areas of accountancy and animal care were not inspected because there were so few trainees. Inspectors observed the following classroom sessions.

7. A team of three inspectors carried out reinspection over a total of nine days. They interviewed 17 trainees from the four occupational areas, 16 staff and 13 employers. They visited 11 placements and observed one training session, which was judged satisfactory. The inspectors looked at trainees' files, internal and external verifiers' records, trainees' portfolios, policies and procedures, assessment records, performance data and evaluation data. The following table shows grades awarded to training observed during the first inspection.

Grades awarded to instruction sessions

| | GRADE 1 | GRADE 2 | GRADE 3 | GRADE 4 | GRADE 5 | TOTAL |
|--------------------------------|----------|----------|----------|----------|----------|-----------|
| Engineering | | 1 | 1 | | | 2 |
| Business administration | | 1 | 2 | | | 3 |
| Hospitality | 1 | | 2 | | | 3 |
| Health, care & public services | | 2 | | | | 2 |
| Total | 1 | 4 | 5 | 0 | 0 | 10 |



OCCUPATIONAL AREAS

Engineering

Grade 3

8. There are seven modern apprentices on the programme who are all employed. They are working towards the engineering NVQ at level 3 and key skills certification by developing portfolios in the workplace. They have all completed a level 2 foundation NVQ in previous years. Trainees cover theory work by attending a national certificate course at the college. Trainees can progress to the higher national certificate course. There was no recruitment to the programme during 1998-99. Two trainees started during 1999-2000. Trainees are employed in local small- and medium-sized companies. Five of the trainees are employed in one company. Trainees are supported by three staff in the engineering department. Two of the staff assess the trainees and visit them in their workplace and all three staff are internal verifiers. Since the first inspection, trainees have achieved four qualifications at level 2.

At the first inspection, the main weaknesses identified were:

- ◆ trainees not visited in the workplace
- ◆ delays in assessment
- ◆ lack of involvement by employers
- ◆ restricted assessment opportunities
- ◆ little integration of key skills
- ◆ lack of workplace assessors

9. The college has rectified these weaknesses by restructuring the role of the assessor and increasing the time available to staff for supporting the trainees. Inspectors identified a number of strengths and weaknesses and awarded the same grade as that given in the reinspection self-assessment report.

STRENGTHS

- ◆ trainees' influence on the scope and content of their programme
- ◆ effective arrangements for the assessment of key skills in the workplace
- ◆ frequent workplace visits by assessors

WEAKNESSES

- ◆ weak internal verification of assessment of key skills and NVQs at level 3
- ◆ apprentices' slow progress
- ◆ inadequate arrangements for checking work-placement providers' health and safety practices

10. Trainees influence the structure of their training. Trainees pointed out that naturally occurring situations in their workplace did not necessarily afford them the opportunity to gather evidence of their competence in the key skill of information technology. The college responded by arranging an off-the-job programme to enable this evidence to be collected. Trainees also requested help in developing portfolios and the college arranged a training session. The curriculum quality manager met the engineering trainees at one of their sessions in the college and invited their feedback on the quality of their training. The trainees were appreciative of the restructured assessor role and the frequent visits by assessors in the workplace. The college has also sought the views of trainees across all the work-based programmes through a questionnaire. An analysis is being made of trainees' responses and this is to be taken into account when drawing up the action plan for work-based training.

11. In the workplace, trainees gather evidence of their competency in key skills. During these visits, assessors take advantage of opportunities when these present themselves, to assess trainees' key skills as the trainees carry out normal workplace tasks. Modern apprentices understand that training in key skills is an integral part of their programme. Assessment for key skills, however, is not integrated with assessment of NVQ competencies as trainees maintain a separate portfolio relating to their acquisition of key skills.

12. Since the original inspection, the college has combined the role of assessor and pastoral mentor. The assessors now give advice and guidance to trainees as well as carrying out assessments. The college has ensured that assessors are allocated sufficient time. They are able to visit trainees in the workplace at least every three weeks and more often when necessary. Employers and trainees welcome these changes. Trainees' reviews are carefully recorded. Communication between the college, employers and trainees has improved. Prior to the original inspection, the retention rate of apprentices was below average. In the last year, this retention rate has improved.

13. The college has recently developed an internal verification policy which complements the awarding body model of verification. Some internal verification practice relating to NVQ level 3 and key skills was poor. Sampling did not cover the full range of assessments. One assessor has had his assessments internally verified only once in the last year. By failing to ensure regular internal verification, the college is contravening awarding body requirements. The external verifier was unaware that some trainees were working towards NVQ level 3 and he was unable to verify the effectiveness of the assessment process at this level.

14. Most of the trainees are making slow progress towards achieving their key skills and NVQ level 3 qualifications. Trainees are not cross referencing evidence to NVQ units as they collect it. There have been delays in providing three of the trainees with their NVQ level 3 documentation. Trainees have missed opportunities to identify and record naturally occurring evidence in the workplace. Trainees have worked on either their NVQ level 3 portfolio or their key skills portfolio. Trainees

have produced separate evidence to meet the NVQ and the key skills requirements when some evidence serves both purposes. There is no system to monitor the trainees' progress in detail, in achieving NVQ units. The college has acknowledged this weakness and a new system has already been developed for monitoring trainees' acquisition of key skills and knowledge of theory.

15. Arrangements for ensuring the health and safety of trainees in the workplace are inadequate. No checks on health and safety standards in work placements have been made in the last year. In the case of one work placement, there is no record that its health and safety standards have ever been checked. In three of the four work placements visited during the inspection, which between them employ 70 per cent of the trainees, examples of poor health and safety practice were observed. The college had asked one company to make a slippery floor safe. No action has been taken and the floor is still a risk to trainees and staff five years after the college's original health and safety visit. Three work placements had no signs for fire doors or fire exits. One work placement in first floor premises had no fire extinguishers. Three work placements had not had portable electrical appliances tested, including appliances used by trainees. The college acknowledges that action is needed to resolve problems related to health and safety. It has recently appointed a part-time safety officer and is drawing up plans for requisite action. Some work providers are not co-operating fully in agreeing a schedule of visits for checking their health and safety practices.

16. Recruitment to the engineering programme is low. The college is trying to promote the benefits of training to employers and young people in the locality. Individual training plans for six of the apprentices did not detail the requirements of the modern apprenticeship framework or those for key skills. The TEC has recently given the college guidance on how to draw up individual training plans.

Business administration

Grade 3

17. Business administration training includes administration, accountancy and information technology. Twenty-eight trainees are working towards administration NVQs at levels 2 and 3, and seven are pursuing information technology NVQs at levels 2 and 3. Half of the trainees are modern apprentices. Off-the-job training consists of day release and an evening at the college each week during the academic year. The college employs seven of the trainees. Key skills have recently been introduced for administration modern apprentices. Business studies staff tutor trainees. Inspectors agreed with the strengths and weaknesses identified in the self-assessment report but recognised others and awarded a lower grade than that given by the college.

STRENGTHS

- ◆ good-quality work placements
- ◆ good physical resources
- ◆ well-qualified and experienced staff

- ◆ effective use of work-based evidence
- ◆ good action-planning

WEAKNESSES

- ◆ inadequate involvement of employers
- ◆ weak integration of key skills
- ◆ lack of systematic work-based assessment
- ◆ targets not set in information technology

18. Staff carefully select work placements which offer a good variety of work experience. Trainees are well supported by employers. Some employers rearrange staff rotas and move trainees within departments to give them the opportunity to develop and gain evidence for their NVQ. Some trainees work independently and have a wide range of responsibilities in their office. There is a rolling programme of recruitment. Many trainees gain permanent jobs.

19. Information technology trainees use modern computers, scanners and laser printers. Trainers and assessors have appropriate qualifications. Trainees are assessed in the workplace using observation techniques. Trainers and trainees work well together but trainees are not set targets. Some information technology trainees are unclear about the relationship between the evidence they have collected and the NVQ requirements.

20. There is some good action-planning in administration between tutors and trainees. Off-the-job training is well planned and delivered. Trainees' portfolios are well constructed and clearly indexed. Trainees' progress is regularly reviewed but trainees are not assessed by direct observation in the workplace.

21. On- and off-the-job training are not integrated and opportunities for involving employers are missed. Key skills have been only recently introduced and trainees are unaware of how they will be assessed or how to provide evidence for assessment. Workplace supervisors are not involved in reviewing their trainees' progress or in their assessments and this prevents trainees making adequate progress. Internal verification activities are confined to the verification of completed portfolios which conflicts with the guidance of the Qualification Curriculum Authority and does not allow for effective feedback to assessors and candidates on their performance.

Hospitality

Grade 4

22. There are six trainees in hospitality and catering. Four trainees are modern apprentices working towards the chef qualifications at level 3 and two national trainees are working towards food preparation and cooking qualifications at level 2. Trainees work in a variety of placements within a 10 mile radius of the college,

including hotels, restaurants and public houses. Trainees attend college one day a week for practical skills training, theory work, information technology and portfolio development. An assessor visits the trainees in the workplace.

At the first inspection, the main weaknesses identified were:

- ◆ poor integration of on- and off-the-job training
- ◆ missed opportunities for assessment
- ◆ poor communication with employers
- ◆ few opportunities for trainees to practise a range of skills
- ◆ poor health and safety awareness

23. During the reinspection, inspectors found that significant weaknesses remain, particularly those relating to assessment and internal verification. Inspectors awarded a lower grade than that given in the revised self-assessment report.

STRENGTHS

- ◆ good facilities and well-qualified staff
- ◆ frequent contact between trainees and the work-based assessor
- ◆ effective integration of key skills training with vocational training

WEAKNESSES

- ◆ insufficient co-ordination of on- and off-the-job training and assessment
- ◆ poor recording of assessments
- ◆ lack of rigour in internal verification

24. The college has good off-the-job training facilities, which have been improved upon since the original inspection. Trainees have adequate equipment and the kitchens are well maintained, clean and spacious. College staff are well qualified and have industrial experience. The college works with a range of employers and work-placement providers who have good facilities, ranging from a high-class city centre hotel to a pub and restaurant. Two of the employers are qualified work-based assessors. Trainees receive frequent visits in the workplace from the college assessor. The assessor conducts reviews, advises trainees and assesses their performance through observation. College staff have undertaken extensive work to make key skills training an integral part of the hospitality and catering programmes. Trainees have been able to gather evidence of their competency in key skills through their performance of daily tasks. Inspectors observed one off-the-job practical skills training session in the college, and this was satisfactory.

25. The college does not co-ordinate the on-the-job training and assessment effectively. At college, all trainees follow the same NVQ programme, regardless of the nature and scope of their work experience. For some trainees, who were

required to acquire a high level of skill in their workplace, this programme was inappropriate. Half the trainees working towards an NVQ at level 3 in kitchen and larder skills had no opportunity to use those skills in the workplace. In some instances, evidence relating to assessments in the workplace was either missing from the trainees' portfolios or not referenced to specific performance criteria and NVQ range statements.

26. The assessment of portfolios is incomplete. Portfolios do not contain assessment plans. One portfolio that had been internally verified lacked evidence to show that the trainee had covered specific units and demonstrated acquisition of the requisite range of competencies. In another portfolio that had also been internally verified, there was no evidence relating to 25 per cent of the necessary work for one NVQ unit. The assessment records do not contain any constructive comments from assessors on the quality of trainees' work.

POOR PRACTICE

Two trainees, who had completed their training in June 1999 were awaiting certification. They were registered as trainees but had not received any structured training for nine months. There was some confusion between the college and the TEC as to whether these trainees should be funded or not while they awaited their certificates.

27. Internal verification is poor and lacks rigour. Internal verification records do not indicate how the internal verifier made his decisions. Internal verification does not meet the requirements of the college internal verification policy. For example, one trainee had been credited with an NVQ unit even though there was no evidence of assessment relating to it. Assessment decisions that did not accord with performance criteria had been verified. In one instance, the internal verifier had verified his own assessment. In September 1999, the college appointed an experienced member of staff to improve the quality of assessment and verification in hospitality and catering. A new system of internal verification was developed in line with the requirements of the awarding body and the college internal verification policy. Hospitality and catering staff, however, have not been using the new procedures.

Health, care & public services

Grade 2

28. There are 35 trainees in care and childcare. In care, there are eight trainees on NVQ level 2 and three modern apprentices working towards NVQ level 3. In childcare, there are eight trainees at level 2 and 16 modern apprentices at level 3. Seventy-seven per cent of trainees are employed and work in private day nurseries and residential and nursing homes for the elderly. Staff are appropriately qualified and have a high level of occupational competence. In childcare, a peripatetic college assessor carries out all the assessments, and, in care, work-based assessors are used in some of the homes. Level 2 trainees attend off-the-job training for one day a week at the college during term time. Level 3 trainees attend two evening training sessions at the college each week, which includes a session devoted to key skills. Modern apprentices were involved in the key skills pilot during 1997-98 and seven out of 15 achieved an award. The college overestimated the strengths it identified in the self-assessment report, and inspectors awarded a lower grade than the one given.

POOR PRACTICE

Key skills training is given to modern apprentices at the college's Walton site at an early evening session. This is immediately followed by a training session for the care NVQ at the Whittingham Road campus, which is half a mile away. No transport is provided between sites, and trainees miss the first half-hour of the session.

GOOD PRACTICE

An effective training session involved trainees explaining how they used display to provide stimulating and safe ideas in their own nurseries. Trainees had a lively discussion, and the trainer ensured that their contributions were recognised and recorded. Their presentation linked the NVQ to key skills and promoted good practice.

STRENGTHS

- ◆ well-planned and -delivered training
- ◆ good-quality training resources
- ◆ well-qualified, experienced and occupationally competent staff
- ◆ trainees highly valued by employers

WEAKNESSES

- ◆ missed opportunities for assessment
- ◆ poor communication with employers

29. Training sessions at the college in care and childcare are lively and stimulating. Trainees participate well, and trainers make good reference to the workplace. Trainers provide additional support for trainees who are experiencing difficulties in learning during the training sessions. Training rooms are well equipped, with appropriate books and journals. Staff are experienced in their healthcare occupational areas and have appropriate training and assessment qualifications. Employers value trainees and offer good support by rearranging rotas to allow for training and assessment and by providing opportunities for trainees to gain the occupational experience needed to achieve the award.

30. In childcare, the college's peripatetic assessor carries out all assessment on four planned visits to the workplace during the year. Witness testimonies from supervisors are used but little use is made of naturally occurring evidence in the assessments. Over half of the care homes have qualified assessors, but they are not used effectively to assess trainees. An annual meeting to discuss training is poorly attended by employers. The training in the communication and application of number key skills makes good reference to the workplace, but this does not apply to the key skill in information technology.

GENERIC AREAS

Equal opportunities

Grade 2

31. Halesowen College takes equal opportunities seriously. There is a manager with responsibility for equal opportunities, who is currently developing monitoring systems across the college. The college's student charter and equal opportunities policy applies equally to trainees. Work-placement officers check that each subcontractor has an equal opportunities policy in place as part of its agreement. The college records the ethnic origin, gender and disabilities of its trainees in line with the TEC requirements. All College programmes are actively marketed to under-represented groups, and the achievements of trainees from such groups are celebrated and publicised. This year's recruitment targets for trainees from minority

ethnic groups were met and exceeded. The self-assessment report identified strengths and weaknesses, some of which were endorsed by inspectors. They awarded a higher grade than that given by the college in its self-assessment report.

STRENGTHS

- ◆ effective implementation of equal opportunities policy
- ◆ good promotion of training opportunities to under-represented groups
- ◆ good use of positive role models

GOOD PRACTICE

The achievement of a catering trainee with learning difficulties, who was supported in the achievement of NVQ levels 1 and 2 and progressed into employment, was celebrated in the in-house newsletter. The trainee won the Halesowen new award for special achievement for young people.

WEAKNESSES

- ◆ underdeveloped monitoring systems

32. Trainees have a good understanding of the implications of the College's equal opportunity policy. There is access to the College for those with disabilities. Wheelchair access is available to all computer rooms and most other areas. All learning materials are critically reviewed to ensure that stereotypes are challenged and trainees are provided with positive images of under-represented groups. The application of equal opportunity policies is highly visible in the areas of administration and care.

33. The equal opportunities committee of the academic board monitors equal opportunities in each curriculum area through a course review system. The College's new College monitoring system has not yet been applied to the work-based training unit and has not progressed beyond complying with the TEC audit systems. There is little feedback from any of the systems used to inform any action-plans for improvement.

Trainee support

Grade 3

34. The College offers trainees advice and guidance at all stages of training. Two college personnel interview most trainees when they apply for vocational training. Trainees receive a one-day induction. Work-placement officers visit trainees in the workplace. Guidance is available from the college's full-time counselling and careers service. The College provides additional facilities for trainees with learning difficulties or disabilities. Inspectors identified additional weaknesses in this area and awarded a lower grade than that given by the college in its self-assessment report.

STRENGTHS

- ◆ good advice and guidance given to trainees
- ◆ all support staff trained as counsellors



WEAKNESSES

- ◆ unsystematic initial assessment
- ◆ poor use of previous learning in some areas

35. A vocational tutor and a member of the training team carry out recruitment interviews jointly. Trainees receive pastoral and occupational advice. Every new trainee is given an induction which provides information on his/her rights and responsibilities, the training course structure and college procedures. Work-placement officers have good working relationships with trainees and are keen to assist with their personal and professional development. Every member of the support team has had training in counselling, and two officers have counselling qualifications. Additional equipment, such as modified keyboards and monitors, is available on request to support trainees with disabilities.

36. During the academic holidays, trainees do not always receive occupational advice at interview, as tutors are on leave. Some trainees who change course in their second year of training are not interviewed for their new course. Initial assessment is unsystematic and does not make good use of previous experience or qualifications to plan training. The induction, which takes place on the first day of training, is inadequate and uninteresting and trainees do not remember the content.

Management of training

Grade 3

37. Responsibility for TEC-funded training in the college is divided between two teams. The training team manages the TEC contracts, finds work placements and conducts reviews with trainees and employers. Each occupational sector has its own programme team which is responsible for training and assessment. Work-based training is a small part of the College's activity. It is integrated, where possible, with the college's mainstream training. The College's policies and procedures are not always directly applicable to the area of work-based training. The College has achieved the Investors in People standard. The strengths and weaknesses identified by the College's self-assessment process were broadly confirmed, but the significance of the weaknesses caused inspectors to award a lower grade than that given in its self-assessment report.

STRENGTHS

- ◆ effective appraisal system
- ◆ good staff development

WEAKNESSES

- ◆ poor communication with subcontractors
- ◆ poor communication between programme and training team
- ◆ no sharing of good practice

38. The formal appraisal procedure involves all college staff and relates to the college's strategic objectives. Staff development needs are identified and acted on. There are regular planned observations, by senior staff and peers, of training sessions in the classroom. These are followed by constructive feedback. Staff development includes industrial placements. Management responsibility for each course is devolved to a 'programme manager', who is a member of the teaching team. The curriculum manager for work-based training agrees on targets with programme managers each year.

39. Workplace supervisors and managers are not involved in the development of training programmes. Their views are not sought when evaluating programmes and they are not always informed of changes. The training team has been restructured to improve co-ordination with programme teams, but this has yet to have any impact. Employers maintain separate links with the training and the programme teams. Good practice in specific occupational areas is not shared among staff, and effort is wasted as teams develop systems and processes individually to meet common needs.

Quality assurance

Grade 3

40. The work-based training team was restructured in September 1999 to include six assessors for each of the curriculum areas. A curriculum quality manager was appointed to lead the team and a new administrator is in post. There is another part-time administrator and a work-placement officer. The administrator is also responsible for the nine New Deal clients. The manager reports to the director of teaching and learning who in turn reports to the college executive and the governors. The assessors are responsible for assessment for the NVQ and key skills, key skills training, carrying out progress reviews, liaising with the employers, guidance on portfolio building and monitoring the trainees' progress. They visit trainees during their college sessions and are available by telephone.

At the first inspection, the main weaknesses identified were:

- ◆ leavers' views not systematically analysed
- ◆ action plans not monitored
- ◆ employers' views not sought
- ◆ irregular reviews and assessment
- ◆ weak internal verification in information technology

41. The college has taken action to rectify these weaknesses. Inspectors agreed with the grade given in the revised self-assessment report.

STRENGTHS

- ◆ effectiveness of restructured team in improving quality assurance
- ◆ effective action planning
- ◆ good arrangements for collecting and analysing trainees' and employers' views

WEAKNESSES

- ◆ underdeveloped quality assurance procedures
- ◆ no target setting for occupational areas
- ◆ failure to identify weaknesses in internal verification

42. Work-based training is now accorded higher priority in the college than at the first inspection. Following the appointment of a middle manager with responsibility for work-based training, work-based training has a higher profile in the college and staff have a greater commitment to it. The manager reports through the assistant principal to the college executive and governing body. The college has engaged more occupational assessors and has clarified the link between the work-based team and the curriculum areas. Trainees have benefited from more assessments and increased support in the workplace. Trainees now make better use of their time at college and attendance is not compulsory. Employers welcome the fact that trainees spend more time in the workplace. A senior assessor has developed new documentation for assessments and reviews and meets regularly with individual assessors to offer them advice and guidance. The work-based training team meets formally once a month with the assistant principal. The meetings are recorded, action is agreed and good practice is shared. Staff have had training in key skills and on using the new documentation. The communication between staff has greatly improved. Staff understand their roles clearly.

43. The new team developed an action plan based on the first inspection report and this took into account feedback from TEC audits and recommendations in external verifiers' reports. The action plan has led to significant improvements in work-based training, including the restructuring of the team and the appointment of six assessors.

44. The college has gathered feedback from trainees and employers at various stages of the programme. Views were sought on each of the three revised induction programmes in July and August. The views of employers who had accepted new trainees were obtained by telephone. Questionnaires to trainees and employers were sent out in December and January and there was a high number of returns. Informal feedback from trainees was also gathered from supervisors during progress reviews. The formal feedback has been analysed and presented as graphs to the assistant principal, manager and administrator.

45. The administrator monitors the trainees' progress. She maintains a database of dates on which trainees are expected to achieve their qualifications and she liaises with the course leaders to confirm that these dates have been met or to ascertain

why they have not been. Reports are presented to the manager and assistant principal so they are able to revise the contract with the TEC, if necessary. There are new procedures on induction and review and a clear flowchart, which describes the trainee's progress, the role of the assessor and the records that should be completed at each stage. The administrator recently developed an interview log sheet and revised the leavers' questionnaire and both are in use. Some questionnaires from trainees who left have been returned but not in sufficient quantity to enable a meaningful analysis of responses to be made. There is good practice on business administration and care training programmes. The records of trainees are well maintained. Records of progress reviews are detailed and portfolios are of a high standard. The college has strategically reviewed engineering and catering training and the governing body has approved recommendations for change. The college has extensive systems for quality assurance of its curriculum programmes involving action plans, surveys, and observation of teaching.

46. The new procedures are not systematically introduced to all staff involved in work-based training. There is no quality assurance manual. There are no dates agreed for the standard implementation of procedures and no plan to review their use. No member of staff has specific responsibility for ensuring the co-ordination of on- and off-the-job training and there are no procedures for monitoring such co-ordination. There has been some confusion over the certification of work-based trainees in the college and some trainees have not received certificates when they should have done. Sometimes, the work-based administrator has not been made aware of the certificates arriving in the college. Key skills training practices are not standardised across the occupational areas. All trainees are initially assessed for key skills but the way key skills are taught varies considerably. Key skills training is an integral part of programmes in business administration and care but is not wholly integral to engineering programmes.

47. Trainees have achieved qualifications since the first inspection. On business administration and care programmes, 44 per cent and 81 per cent of trainees, respectively, achieved qualifications. On engineering and hospitality programmes, where the numbers of trainees are low, 75 per cent and 80 per cent of trainees, respectively, achieved level 2 qualifications. The proportion of trainees leaving before they complete implementation of their individual training plan is high in engineering at 100 per cent and 90 per cent in administration.

48. Targets are set for the work-based trainees but they are not set for each occupational area or for each assessor. General targets are discussed at team meetings and progress in attaining them is monitored by the administrator. The targets relate to the trainees' achievement of their qualifications in June when the academic year ends.

49. The college internal verification policy is operating well in administration and care but not in hospitality. Decisions are not recorded, there are incomplete assessments, workplace evidence is not used and there is inadequate feedback to trainee and assessor. The college was not aware of some of these weaknesses.



50. Employers have a contract with the college but it is not revised or discussed with new staff. There is no clear system for reviewing the contract and checking that all aspects of it are relevant. The college checks that the employers' liability insurance is current but does not check employers' observance of health and safety requirements. When trainees leave, they are given a final interview. They answer a questionnaire and their destinations are recorded. There is no follow-up survey of the subsequent progress of those who have completed their training. The college misses the opportunity to promote the success of its former trainees.