



TRAINING STANDARDS COUNCIL

INSPECTION REPORT FEBRUARY 1999

Lancaster & Morecambe College

SUMMARY

Lancaster & Morecambe College offers work-based training in several occupational areas. Training in construction, hospitality, hair & beauty and foundation for work is good. Training in business administration is satisfactory. The off-the-job training provided at the college is very good and trainees benefit from the excellent facilities and resources there. Opportunities are missed to collect evidence of trainees' skill attainment in the workplace. Trainees' receive good individual support. The college upholds and promotes equality of opportunity. Quality assurance systems are good. Management systems in college are good. There are insufficient links between on- and off-the-job training and assessment.

GRADES

OCCUPATIONAL AREAS	GRADE
Construction	2
Business administration	3
Hospitality	2
Hair & beauty	2
Foundation for work	2

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

KEY STRENGTHS

- ◆ high standard of off-the-job training
- ◆ excellent resources for off-the-job training
- ◆ opportunities for trainees to take additional qualifications and progress to higher levels
- ◆ rigorous identification of foundation trainees' learning needs
- ◆ thorough and effective self-assessment

KEY WEAKNESSES

- ◆ weak links between on- and off-the-job training
- ◆ lost opportunities for work-based assessment
- ◆ no systematic initial assessment
- ◆ lack of appropriate vocational experience on the part of some monitoring staff
- ◆ failure to record some details of additional support in trainees' files

INTRODUCTION

1. Lancaster & Morecambe College is a medium-sized college of further education. It serves north Lancashire, south Cumbria and the western edge of North Yorkshire, and in particular, the city of Lancaster and the seaside resort of Morecambe, both of which have areas of high unemployment and a shrinking industrial base. The main campus is situated on a green-field site between the two urban centres of Lancaster and Morecambe. The college operates from other sites situated in Lancaster and Morecambe and surrounding areas. The college has approximately 1,456 full- and 3,869 part-time students. Fifty-eight per cent of students are female. Seventy-two per cent of full-time students are aged 16 to 19, and 86 per cent of part-time students are over 19.
2. Lancaster & Morecambe College has held contracts with Lancashire Area West Training and Enterprise Council (TEC) since 1991. It gained its contract with Enterprise Cumbria Ltd in 1996. The college is contracted to provide modern apprenticeship and other youth training programmes. Since 1998, the college has provided full-time courses under the New Deal, and off-the-job training for the Employment Option for Lancashire Area West TEC. Work-based training schemes funded by the TEC are provided at the main college site and Morecambe Training Centre. The training centre is situated in a building in the centre of Morecambe. The building was previously a gymnasium, which the college has refurbished, with assistance from Lancashire Area West TEC. Morecambe Training Centre is the administration centre responsible for managing TEC-funded training programmes.
3. Lancaster & Morecambe College is in a largely rural area, serving a fairly dispersed population. The area is largely dependent on service industries, including hotel catering, beauty therapy, personal services, sports studies and care. More recently, computing and information technology are the areas attracting the highest recruitment. The college operates in an extremely competitive environment. In the Lancaster district alone, there are six schools with sixth forms, all competing in the post-16 market. The current unemployment rate stands at 6.4 per cent, compared with the national average of 4.4 per cent, while 71.6 per cent of those aged 16 are in full-time education in the Lancaster district, compared with a national figure of 67.9 per cent.
4. The proportion of school leavers in Lancaster achieving five or more general certificates of secondary education (GCSEs) at grade C and above was 47 per cent, compared with the national average of 46.3 per cent, for 1998.
5. The proportion the population from minority ethnic groups in the college's catchment area is less than one per cent.

INSPECTION FINDINGS

6. Lancaster & Morecambe College produced a self-assessment report in August 1998 on all its work in preparation for the subsequent inspection by the Further Education Funding Council (FEFC). After a training programme, arranged by Lancashire Area West TEC, the training centre's manager produced, under the guidance of the assistant principal (quality, curriculum support and development), an additional section to the college's self-assessment report, on its government-funded training provision, in December 1998.

7. A team of seven inspectors spent 21 days at Lancaster & Morecambe College during February 1999. Inspectors did not inspect the agriculture, engineering or retailing and customer service programmes, as they had a low number of trainees. Inspectors met 39 trainees, employers, representatives from Lancashire Area West TEC and careers service. They visited 18 workplaces and all relevant college sites. They met 27 staff, including the principal, assistant principals, financial services manager, training centre manager and other training staff. Inspectors visited all training sites and observed training activities, including training sessions and review meetings. They also reviewed course files and examined trainees' reference files, training plans, assessment records and portfolios and numerous documents about training and its management.

Grades awarded to instruction sessions

	GRADE 1	GRADE 2	GRADE 3	GRADE 4	GRADE 5	TOTAL
Construction		2				2
Business administration			1			1
Hospitality	1	1	1			3
Hair & beauty		1				1
Foundation for work	1	1				2
Total	2	5	2	0	0	9

OCCUPATIONAL AREAS

Construction

Grade 2

8. There are 17 youth trainees, of whom five are on a modern apprenticeship programme and 12 are on other youth training programmes. Three trainees are working for national vocational qualifications (NVQs) in carpentry and joinery, one for an NVQ in brickwork and 13 for an NVQ in plumbing. All off-the-job training takes place at the college's main site on a day-release basis. Trainees spend the remaining four days each week on work placement. Employers providing placements

are, in the main, small contracting companies carrying out domestic renovation and small housing development. Trainees are visited at college and in the workplace by monitoring officers and have recently benefited from site visits by occupational tutors. Inspectors agreed with many of the strengths and weaknesses identified in the self-assessment report. Inspectors awarded a higher grade than that given by the college.

STRENGTHS

- ◆ careful integration of key skills with vocational content in all occupational areas
- ◆ good opportunities for trainees to gain additional qualifications
- ◆ maximum use of trainees' prior achievement
- ◆ good use of workplace evidence in the assessment process
- ◆ high-quality off-the-job resources

WEAKNESSES

- ◆ underdeveloped links between on- and off-the-job training

9. Staff providing off-the-job training are committed to ensuring it is of high quality. All teaching staff are occupationally qualified and hold a range of qualifications as assessors, verifiers and teachers. Learning resources are good. Trainees have access to spacious, well-equipped workshops, and a good range of textbooks, learning support packs and manufacturers' promotional material is available to them.

10. Participants in all courses benefit from having their relevant prior experience taken into account when working towards a qualification. Plumbers working for one employer are visited by an occupational tutor who carries out an analysis of their daily tasks. With the assistance of an external verifier, the tutor draws up a training programme, which is designed to enable trainees to gain an NVQ with minimum attendance at college. Trainees in all occupational areas can take information technology programmes and gain the computer literacy and information technology certificate. Trainees value the chance to participate in these programmes. They use the skills they gain in them to present computer-generated material for their portfolios, most of which are of a high standard.

11. Trainees benefit from the wide range of training opportunities available with these placements. A recent initiative has allowed occupational tutors to visit trainees in the workplace. Tutors use visits to analyse work being carried out in the workplace and cross-reference tasks to NVQ units. Visits are also used to confirm witness testimonies and photograph trainees' work. These visits are beginning to help trainees to identify links between on- and off-the-job training. In some instances, however, trainees have had to repeat at college, tasks which they had already completed to a high standard at work. Employers value the contact with staff directly responsible for providing off-the-job training. Staff have done a

considerable amount of work in identifying how key skills can be developed across all occupational areas. The assessment of key skills is integral to the overall assessment for the qualification. Staff have been creative in finding ways in which trainees can develop key skills through all aspects of their training.

12. Trainees value the support they receive in the workplace. During reviews, monitoring takes place of trainees' progress towards reaching the qualification and in carrying out workplace duties. In some cases, the reviewer lacks qualifications in the vocational area in question and the trainees are set undemanding targets. In the past year, six out of eight leavers gained their target NVQ.

Business administration

Grade 3

13. There are 21 trainees, of whom 11 are modern apprentices and 10 are on other youth training programmes. Trainees are working towards NVQ levels 2 and 3 in administration. The modern apprentices attend the main college site one day a week to acquire underpinning knowledge and undergo some practical training. Sixty-seven per cent of youth trainees are employed, with the remainder in work placements. The weekly sessions at the college and training centre provide trainees with underpinning knowledge and assist them to complete their portfolios of evidence. Staff who provide the training are qualified assessors. Inspectors found strengths and weaknesses which were not mentioned in the self-assessment report and awarded the same grade as that given by the college.

STRENGTHS

- ◆ carefully designed learning support materials
- ◆ modern apprentices' high motivation and ability to manage their own learning programmes
- ◆ opportunities for youth trainees to acquire additional key skills
- ◆ good introduction to learning programme

WEAKNESSES

- ◆ underdeveloped internal verification system for youth training programme
- ◆ failure to update trainees' assessment records regularly
- ◆ underdeveloped links between on- and off-the job training and assessment
- ◆ lack of formal and structured assessment

14. Trainers work individually with trainees to provide them with good support and guidance, both on and off the job. The trainers help trainees to identify evidence of their skill acquisition in the workplace for the purposes of NVQ assessment. The trainers take a close interest in the trainees' progress and welfare and offer youth trainees assistance in finding jobs. Lancaster & Morecambe College has good

working relationships with placement providers and employers. Placement officers take into account trainees' individual needs when arranging placements and arrange alternative placements, if necessary. Any problems are addressed quickly, and trainees can telephone the college at any time. Modern apprentice trainees are carefully matched to appropriate employers and are well motivated. In a few cases, these trainees attend further training courses at work to develop their skills and knowledge. All youth trainees working towards NVQ level 2 are offered the chance to obtain key skills units. The training sessions at the training centre take place in a light, airy room, and the atmosphere is relaxed and comfortable. In some sessions, trainees use packs of learning materials which they can work through on their own or in small groups. In other sessions, trainees receive assistance in building up their portfolios of evidence for the purposes of NVQ assessment. Trainees freely ask questions and request information or guidance, and the working relationship between trainees and trainer is very good. Many trainees have progressed to higher-level education and training and have gained further qualifications.

15. Opportunities for assessing trainees during their on-the-job training are missed. Trainers and staff carry out little assessment of modern apprentices' performance in the workplace. Employers do not plan or record on-the-job training, and trainees do not see a link between training received at work and the underpinning knowledge they are taught at college. Assessment is not fully recorded. There is no systematic recording of the feedback on performance which trainees receive when they are assessed. Documents have been drawn up for recording such feedback but their use is not yet established. The internal verification system for youth trainees is underdeveloped. There is no systematic sampling of assessment decisions or monitoring of the assessment process.

Hospitality

Grade 2

16. There are 20 trainees completing hospitality programmes, of whom 13 are modern apprentices following the 'chef apprentice' framework and seven are on other youth training programmes working towards NVQ in food preparation & cooking at level 2. The number enrolling on these courses has been stable over the last three years. All trainees are employed in a range of placements, including hotels and restaurants in the local area and the Lake District which have won national awards. All trainees attend one day's off-the-job training at the college's catering department each week, during college terms. Training staff are qualified assessors (D32/33) or are working to obtain these qualifications and have a substantial range of appropriate professional experience. Inspectors agreed with the strengths and weaknesses identified in the self-assessment report, but considered that the strengths outweighed the weaknesses and they awarded a higher grade than that given by the college.

STRENGTHS

- ◆ outstanding off-the-job training
- ◆ opportunities for trainees to obtain additional qualifications and progress to

higher levels

- ◆ good work placements offering trainees a wide range of tasks
- ◆ outstanding resources

WEAKNESSES

- ◆ missed opportunities for assessment in the workplace

GOOD PRACTICE

Each week, employers identify the off-the-job training activity for the following week and change the menu accordingly to help the trainees to prepare for it.

GOOD PRACTICE

On NVQ level 3 programmes, a book or chef of the week is chosen as a focus for the trainees' studies, in order that trainees may investigate a variety of culinary styles and rôle models.

17. College trainers have well-designed schemes of work and training session plans. Off-the-job training provides trainees with the requisite knowledge to underpin their acquisition of NVQ skills. The standard of work in trainees' files is high and trainees are able to apply their knowledge and skills in their employment. Trainees gain experience in the college in a variety of realistic working environments, including a restaurant, bistro and conference/function suite. These supplement and complement each trainee's individual workplace environment. Trainees can take appropriate additional qualifications. They are encouraged to go beyond the NVQ standards and to develop creativity and originality. In many of the workplaces, trainees are provided with a wide range of experience in food preparation and they have to work to challenging standards. The college's accommodation for hospitality training is luxuriously furnished. It has plant and equipment of the highest commercial standards. The college enjoys excellent working relationships with prominent hoteliers and caterers who have helped the college to acquire its superb facilities for hospitality training by providing financial support and sponsorship for refurbishment projects. The college has earned a good reputation for the quality of its training and trainees are recruited from a wide geographical area. Trainees are highly motivated and they expressed their appreciation of all aspects of their training. All trainees who complete the course achieve their qualification and obtain a full-time job. The number of trainees who leave the programme early is low.

18. In the workplace, supervisors with assessors' qualifications monitor, but rarely assess, trainees' work. Trainees miss opportunities to gather evidence of their work-based skills for their portfolios. Trainees' main practical food preparation competencies are usually assessed off the job. In many instances, trainees have to spend valuable off-the-job training time repeating, for the purposes of assessment, activities which they have already carried out in the workplace.

Hair & beauty

Grade 2

19. There are 17 young people receiving training in hairdressing. Trainees are working towards NVQs in hairdressing at level 2 and/or level 3. There are 12 modern apprentices and five on other youth training programmes. Trainees spend four days a week at work in commercial salons and one day a week in the training salon at the college. Inspectors agreed with many of the strengths and weaknesses in the self-assessment report. They identified additional strengths and awarded a higher grade than that given by the college.

STRENGTHS

- ◆ high-standard of off-the-job training
- ◆ robust internal verification system
- ◆ careful development of key skills as an integral part of NVQ training
- ◆ opportunities for trainees to take additional qualifications and progress to higher levels
- ◆ professionally run and well-resourced training salon

WEAKNESSES

- ◆ insufficient information for employers on trainees' progress
- ◆ underdeveloped work-based assessment

20. The off-the-job training programme includes well-structured and integrated practical and theory sessions. There are comprehensive schemes of work for all sessions. Instruction is lively and relevant. Good use is made of question-and-answer techniques to share information and check trainees' understanding. Trainees are thoroughly involved in their work. There is a robust, well-planned and documented internal verification system. Trainees are given a timetable of internal verification dates and are also aware that they can request additional assessment and verification, if required. The internal verifiers meet monthly to discuss and plan forthcoming verification.

21. Key skills are an integral part of the training programme leading to the NVQ in hairdressing. All modern apprentices are given the opportunity to progress beyond NVQ level 1 in information technology, the requisite minimum attainment under the terms of the modern apprenticeship framework, to NVQ level 3. Information technology resources are available in the hairdressing section. All trainees have access to this room during college opening hours and can use this facility on a drop-in basis. The training salon in the college offers excellent resources. Many trainees achieve their qualifications. Less than 2 per cent of trainees leave the programme early, without completing their qualification.

22. The placements the college provides for trainees are of a high quality. All trainees interviewed confirmed that they are fully supported by their employers, who offer them additional training sessions in the salons. However, employers expressed concern that they receive little information from the college about the trainees' progress. New systems of liaison with employers are not yet established. Work-based assessment is also underdeveloped.

Foundation for work

Grade 2

23. There are 26 trainees on prevocational training programmes: 16 on a skills-sampling programme which includes a one-week assessment of trainees' needs, followed by a five-week period of job-sampling. Ten trainees are on a 12-week skills-development programme which addresses their social and personal needs.

Trainees are encouraged to work on foundation numeracy and/or literacy programmes, or key skills units at level 1. The skills evaluation programme is a one-week course for disadvantaged/disaffected young people and aims to identify their training and personal development needs. There are no trainees currently working on the skills evaluation programme. Inspectors agreed with many of the strengths and weaknesses identified in the self-assessment report and awarded the same grade as that given by the college.

STRENGTHS

- ◆ rigorous assessment of trainees' learning needs
- ◆ excellent working relationship between trainers and trainees
- ◆ ability of trainers to help trainees with personal problems
- ◆ imaginative training methods
- ◆ good rates of achievement and progression to occupational programmes
- ◆ good resources

WEAKNESSES

- ◆ failure to enforce health and safety standards in the workplace rigorously
- ◆ underdeveloped key skills programmes

24. Trainers have excellent working relationships with trainees. All trainers are well qualified and highly experienced. Trainers have attended 'train the trainers psychological motivation and counselling courses'. They are able to assist trainees with personal problems which adversely affect their learning experience. Sixty-seven per cent of foundation trainees progress to full-time education courses, employment or occupational work-based training programmes.

25. Training methods are imaginative. They involve a variety of appropriate activities which enable trainees to develop their basic skills. In one training session, trainees were encouraged to write their own job advertisement and then invite other trainees to apply for the position. Ninety per cent of trainees who start the wordpower and/or numberpower certificates successfully complete the programme. Training in key skills is underdeveloped and it is not an integral part of the training programme. Opportunities for gathering evidence of trainees' attainment in key skills are missed. In some instances, health and safety regulations were not strictly observed in the workplace.

26. Trainees receive an individual interview on their referral to the training centre. During interview, trainees are given comprehensive advice on the aims and objectives of each programme. Trainees are set daily targets and their progress towards reaching them is reviewed fortnightly. Trainees are involved in the choice of the occupational areas selected for their work experience placements.

GENERIC AREAS

Equal opportunities

Grade 2

27. The college is committed to upholding and promoting equality of opportunity. The college's values, policies, strategies and targets are understood and supported by all staff. The college has opened two information shops in Lancaster and Morecambe. Through these, it is reaching new markets and widening participation in education and training. The college operates an open-door recruitment policy and identifies the right course at the right level for all trainees. Inspectors agreed with all the strengths and some of the weaknesses in the self-assessment report and awarded a higher grade than that given by the college.

STRENGTHS

- ◆ careful equal opportunities monitoring of staff recruitment
- ◆ effective monitoring of the implementation of the equal opportunities strategy and policy
- ◆ detailed and effective equal opportunities action-planning
- ◆ strong staff commitment to equal opportunities
- ◆ trainees' good understanding of equal opportunities

WEAKNESSES

- ◆ insufficient support for employers in their promotion of equal opportunities
- ◆ no post-course evaluation by trainees of the college's promotion of equal opportunities

28. The college's staff selection and recruitment policy is good. All recruitment advertisements encourage applicants from groups under-represented on courses. Staff undergo annual appraisals, evaluate their own performance and are provided with suitable opportunities for professional development. The college has established an equal opportunities monitoring committee, with representatives from management, teaching staff, support staff and students. The aim of the committee is to formulate, monitor the effectiveness of, and update the college's equal opportunities policy. In addition, the committee develops procedures to address complaints and advise the academic board on equal opportunities issues in the college which affect staff, students and visitors. All staff have a thorough knowledge and understanding of the college's commitment to equal opportunities. Staff awareness of the importance of equal opportunities is furthered through effective induction, regular staff development and the dissemination of good practice.

29. Trainees are briefed at induction about equal opportunities and their responsibility to maintain the standards of behaviour set in the student's handbook. Marketing materials prepared by the college are carefully monitored and reviewed to

ensure that they reflect no bias.

30. Monitoring of employers' upholding of equal opportunities is underdeveloped. Insufficient support is given to employers to help them to draw up an equal opportunities policy, carry out action-planning to improve their promotion of equal opportunities, and keep abreast of equal opportunities legislation. The college gathers the views of trainees on the quality of their learning experience but trainees are not asked to comment on whether the college is effective in providing them with equality of opportunity.

Trainee support

Grade 2

31. An initial interview is given at the Morecambe Training Centre, after which trainees are referred to an occupational specialist where a further interview and an occupational assessment take place. A general induction programme is carried out at the training centre. A further induction programme is provided by occupational specialists. Trainees are supported in the workplace by monitoring officers who visit every 12 weeks to conduct progress reviews and offer pastoral support. Inspectors awarded the same grade as that given in the self-assessment report.

STRENGTHS

- ◆ strong pastoral support for trainees
- ◆ effective adaptation of equipment for trainees with special learning and/or support needs
- ◆ foundation trainees' success in progressing to NVQ courses
- ◆ effective links with specialist advice and support networks
- ◆ staff trained in counselling

WEAKNESSES

- ◆ no systematic initial assessment
- ◆ insufficient checks on trainees' recall of induction topics

GOOD PRACTICE

The tutors and parents of a trainee with dyslexia have worked closely together exchanging letters and telephone calls. The trainee has made considerable progress in developing occupational skills and self-confidence and has recently passed the theory part of the driving test. According to the parents, such success is entirely due to their child's

32. Trainees benefit from the high level of personal support available to them at Lancaster & Morecambe College. Additional learning support is provided for those trainees who need it in an unobtrusive and sensitive way which does not cause them embarrassment. Occupational tutors work closely with learning support staff to ensure that there is a focus on the requirements of the NVQ programme. The support tutor was familiar with the details of each occupational unit towards which his trainees are working. Staff who monitor trainees' progress in the workplace are not always aware of trainees' additional support needs and how these can be met through workplace activities.

33. All trainees have access to a wide range of specialist support agencies, including drug and alcohol abuse counselling, housing advice and the probation service. These services are used frequently. Although these services are called upon frequently, details of their usage are not recorded. The college has an effective policy to promote counselling training and signing for the hard of hearing.

34. Induction carried out by the college is thorough and covers all aspects of training, including grievance and harassment procedures. Some topics are not always reinforced on programmes. For example, some trainees have poor recall of details of their rights and responsibilities. A few trainees starting outside peak recruitment times receive insufficient induction. The quality of initial assessment of trainees varies between occupational programmes and on some, it is poor. It is unclear where responsibility lies for the identification of trainees' additional learning support needs.

35. Trainees' views are sought, at regular stages throughout training, on the support they receive. The resulting data are carefully analysed and have been used to improve provision. The college ensures that those with special physical needs are accommodated on mainstream programmes. This has involved adapting or repositioning equipment and providing Braille or hearing loops for those with sensory difficulties.

Management of training

Grade 3

36. The manager of the Morecambe Training Centre is responsible for the co-ordination of all TEC-funded training. Off-the-job training is provided by the college or subcontracted to specialist training providers. Training centre staff monitor all work-placement providers and conduct the contractual reviews of trainees' individual training plans. Inspectors considered that some of the strengths identified in the self-assessment report were no more than normal practice. Some weaknesses had already been addressed by the time of the inspection. Inspectors agreed with the grade in the self-assessment report.

STRENGTHS

- ◆ realistic action plans
- ◆ open-style management
- ◆ effective staff appraisal and staff development systems

WEAKNESSES

- ◆ underdeveloped management of on- and off-the-job training
- ◆ gaps in effective communications among employers, the training centre and college schools

37. Staff are encouraged to communicate openly, at and across, all levels within the college. There are regular meetings which focus on appropriate issues and involve staff in, and across, schools. Staff are involved in the evaluation of their programmes. Managers set strategic and operating targets. Annual staff appraisals with half-yearly reviews allow managers to review individual performance regularly. Information gathered from appraisals is used to inform planning and implementation of a staff development programme.

38. The college does not ensure that there are appropriate links between on- and off-the-job training. Regular visits by college tutors to employers' placements are being developed, but have not yet been fully implemented. The college provides good off-the-job training, but employers have little involvement in this.

39. Monitoring staff conduct regular reviews of trainees' progress. Reviews involve employers and trainees, but do not always involve college tutors. Some employers said that their regular source of information about off-the-job training is their trainees. A system for college tutors to report trainees' progress to employers has been agreed on, but has not yet been fully implemented. In some instances, trainees' additional learning needs have been identified and addressed by staff at the college but the training centre has not been kept informed of them. The self-assessment report recognised gaps in communication between all parties involved in training.

Quality assurance

Grade 2

40. Lancaster & Morecambe College has a well-documented quality assurance system. The college meets several external quality standards, including the Investors in People Standard and those of the TECs with which it contracts. The strategic plan contains measurable objectives, reflecting the goals and values of the college's mission statement. The college has a strong commitment to continuous improvement. Quality assurance is managed on a daily basis by the assistant principal (quality, curriculum support and development) assisted by two quality managers. The college has completed its first full self-assessment cycle and has submitted a self-assessment report to the FEFC. A further supplementary self-assessment report was prepared against *Raising the Standard* for this inspection. Inspectors agreed with the strengths and weaknesses in quality assurance which were cited in the self-assessment report but they awarded a higher grade than that given by the college.

STRENGTHS

- ◆ thorough and accurate self-assessment report
- ◆ robust quality assurance arrangements
- ◆ effective of quality assurance systems in leading to improvement in trainers'

performance

- ◆ effective collection and useful analysis of trainees and employers' views

WEAKNESSES

- ◆ lack of appropriate vocational experience on the part of some monitoring staff

41. The self-assessment report prepared for this inspection is an accurate, detailed assessment of the strengths and weaknesses of provision. The report has been used to prepare a detailed action plan which includes realistic target-achievement dates. Many of the action points have already been successfully addressed. Following the completion of the second cycle of self-assessment, further changes have been planned to improve some quality assurance procedures. These changes are not yet fully established.

42. Evaluation of trainers' performance is carried out regularly. Trainers have their work in the classroom observed by both managers and other trainers. Classroom observations are carefully timetabled to ensure that a range of training activities is covered. Observations are completed against a standard checklist. Observers have all completed a comprehensive training programme to prepare them for their rôle. The findings of observations are used to provide trainers with guidance and support and to identify and agree their training needs. Observation results are also used to inform programme review meetings.

43. Some monitoring staff lack appropriate vocational experience. They do not monitor trainees' progress towards attainment of the requisite NVQ competencies with sufficient rigour and they fail to set the trainees appropriate and demanding targets.

44. The college has a well-documented quality assurance system which covers every aspect of college activity. Quality assurance guidelines and staff training emphasise the need to identify areas for improvement. Carefully documented procedures are used throughout the college which aim to ensure high quality provision. Course files are maintained for all training programmes. Regular meetings are held at senior management level, to discuss quality assurance issues and continuous improvement. Quality assurance is a regular agenda item at all training centre meetings. Internal verification processes are carried out regularly for each programme. Meetings are well organised, with staff responsible for the delivery of government-funded training programmes sharing information and good practice. Programme review meetings have recently been introduced in each school to review trainees' achievement and retention rates, programme content and timescales for completion of training.

45. Trainees' views are collected systematically throughout their training programme. Employers' comments are gathered through surveys and by personal feedback to monitoring officers. The views of staff are gathered during appraisal and through questionnaires. All the collected views and comments made by staff,



trainees and employers are carefully analysed to provide evidence for self-assessment and to inform action planning.