



TRAINING STANDARDS COUNCIL

INSPECTION REPORT SEPTEMBER 1999

**5 E Limited**

## SUMMARY

5E Limited offers good training in business administration and satisfactory training in foundation for work in a well-equipped and -resourced centre. Business administration focuses on information technology, and trainees receive well-planned training and thorough assessment. The foundation for work programme offers good training in information technology and job-search skills, but does not provide basic skills training. There is a lack of external work-placement opportunities in both occupational sectors. Staff are rigorous in ensuring that the company promotes equality of opportunity through most aspects of the training programmes. Support for trainees is good; they receive high-quality individual support. Management of training and quality assurance are satisfactory. Teamwork is valued by all the parties involved in training and there are enough staff to give trainees individual attention when required. Quality assurance procedures are still being developed, but continuous improvement in training is apparent.

### GRADES

OCCUPATIONAL AREAS	GRADE
Business administration	2
Foundation for work	3

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

### KEY STRENGTHS

- ◆ well-planned pre-NVQ skills development programme
- ◆ excellent retention rates in foundation for work
- ◆ on-site creche available at no cost to trainees
- ◆ good-quality and detailed reviews
- ◆ flexible attendance patterns
- ◆ flexible deployment of staff
- ◆ systematic and thorough evaluation of trainees' feedback
- ◆ advanced data-analysis system developed in-house

### KEY WEAKNESSES

- ◆ overuse of simulated evidence in portfolios
- ◆ no basic skills training
- ◆ no external work placements
- ◆ selection procedures exclude some trainees with basic skills needs
- ◆ no identification of additional support requirements at initial assessment
- ◆ inadequate planning of on- and off-the-job training
- ◆ no overall framework for quality assurance
- ◆ inadequate formal monitoring of training and skills acquisition

## INTRODUCTION

1. 5E Limited (5E) is based in Tottenham, in the London borough of Haringey, and operates from one centre. 5E's programme director is a member of the board which manages the centre. The centre houses some 30 organisations, the majority being minority-ethnic support groups and voluntary sector organisations. 5E was set up in October 1998 to provide prevocational and vocational training in information technology, basic skills and employment skills to local disadvantaged communities. 5E has a sister organisation offering training which is based in the same building. Some trainees take up work placements here. As a new company, 5E is relatively small with four full-time staff supported by five part timers. Some staff are shared between 5E and the sister training provider. 5E has a contract with North London Training and Enterprise Council (TEC) for work-based learning and a basic employability programme, both for adults. This is 5E's first full contract year providing training. It subcontracts with organisations to provide work placements, but these are not yet being used. There are currently 33 trainees across the two programmes for adults. There are 10 trainees taking information technology national vocational qualifications (NVQs) as a work-based 'learning pathway' and 23 trainees taking foundation for work, which is known locally as a 'basic employability pathway'. These trainees can also take information technology qualifications.

2. The company recruits from Tottenham and the surrounding five-mile radius. The trainees consist largely of people from minority ethnic and refugee communities, women returning to work, particularly single mothers, long-term unemployed, and people who have lost their jobs through redundancy. Haringey suffers from extensive economic deprivation with high levels of unemployment and low levels of educational achievement. Haringey's unemployment rate is just under 14.8 per cent and in Tottenham it is 23.1 per cent. These are both substantially higher than the national average of 5.2 per cent for 1998. In the borough, the proportion of unemployed people over the age of 25 who have been out of work for two years or more is 3.8 per cent. That is almost double the London average of 2.1 per cent. The local area has suffered from a decline of its manufacturing industries from the early 1980s to the mid-1990s. At present, service industries are dominant with 83 per cent employed in this sector. Haringey has one of the highest ratios of minority ethnic populations in England at approximately 41 per cent. This percentage is increasing rapidly because of an influx of refugees and asylum seekers into the borough. Of these, 27 per cent of the over-25 age group are unemployed.

3. In 1998, the percentage of school leavers achieving five or more general certificates of secondary education (GCSEs) at grade C and above in Haringey was 26.6 per cent, compared with the national average of 46.3 per cent.

## INSPECTION FINDINGS

4. The programme director and programme co-ordinator participated in training on self-assessment offered by North London TEC. The self-assessment process began in May 1999. In reaching their judgements a variety of sources were used including: evaluation of trainees' feedback; interviews with staff and trainees; observation of training and tutorial sessions and quantitative data. Following the collation of evidence, the staff met and agreed on a grading for each of the occupational areas as well as the generic aspects. The self-assessment report was completed in July 1999. 5E was accurate in critically evaluating the provision it offers. The inspection team agreed with most of strengths and weaknesses in the self-assessment report.

5. A team of three inspectors spent a total of nine days at 5E during September 1999. The inspection team interviewed 20 trainees and seven members of the company's staff. They observed seven training and assessment activities. Inspectors also examined 10 portfolios, 17 trainees' files, and a wide range of programme records, external audit reports and numerous documents relevant to the training and its management. The following table shows the grades awarded to the training sessions observed by inspectors.

Grades awarded to instruction sessions

	GRADE 1	GRADE 2	GRADE 3	GRADE 4	GRADE 5	TOTAL
Business administration	1	3				4
Foundation for work	1	2				3
<b>Total</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>7</b>

### OCCUPATIONAL AREAS

#### **Business administration (information technology)**

#### **Grade 2**

6. There are 10 trainees on the training programme leading to the use and support of information technology NVQ at level 2. However, trainees on the basic employability programme also have the opportunity to complete level 1 and there are currently 13 working towards this qualification. There is, therefore, a mixture of trainees completing information technology training programmes at levels 1 and 2 in all training rooms. The company has five well-equipped training rooms for providing information technology. Training and assessment for information technology at levels 1 and 2 are carried out in-house. All trainees completing level 2 and two trainees on level 1 are on internal work placements. To date, three trainees on level 2 have left without a qualification. There are four staff who are occupationally experienced and have trainers and assessors' qualifications. Assessment and internal verification are ongoing throughout the programmes. The

self-assessment report was accurate in identifying nearly all the strengths and weaknesses. Some weaknesses had been addressed by the time of inspection and the grade awarded by inspectors is higher than that given by the company.

### *STRENGTHS*

- ◆ well-equipped and -resourced training rooms
- ◆ good tracking of trainees' progress
- ◆ good-quality training and assessment planning
- ◆ appropriate individual targets set for trainees
- ◆ well-referenced portfolios

### *WEAKNESSES*

- ◆ low achievement rates
- ◆ no progression routes beyond level 2
- ◆ overuse of simulated evidence in portfolios

7. The company has invested in new computers and laser printers, some of which are networked. Trainees have access to a range of up-to-date software packages in common use within modern office environments, including desktop publishing packages. Trainees also have access to the Internet and e-mail packages during the week and on Saturdays. Each trainee has an individual workstation in modern computer rooms with posters and decoration which recreates an office environment. Trainers use a range of handouts, both the teaching notes contained and the standard of reproduction are good. Trainees have access to two members of staff during individual training sessions and are able to make good progress.

8. The company has a computerised tracking system to record the units achieved by each trainee. Trainers also track trainees' progress for each element of the units and trainees themselves are issued with individual progress records to record the tasks and assessments they have completed. Trainees have a clear idea of what is required to achieve individual units and the qualifications.

9. Information technology training for levels 1 and 2 is well planned. It focuses on one-to-one training sessions and group tutorials involving practical demonstrations of software packages or, for example, how to clean computer hardware. All training fully involves the trainees and takes place at an appropriate pace. Tutors check understanding on a one-to-one basis and allow trainees to think about the computer functions used and what they need to do next to complete their tasks. Trainers use appropriate visual aids. Trainees are taught to understand mistakes made and how to make corrections. All trainees are able to integrate data effectively between several software packages. They are conscientious, take their training programmes seriously and produce a range of materials for their portfolios which contain a substantial amount of evidence. Regular assessments take place for units and elements of the qualification. Assessment plans are produced and assessment checklists are used. Written and oral questions are used and trainees

are given feedback on the assessment process. Trainees work at their own pace towards individual targets and at different levels, and are aware of the contents of the training programme. They work to complete a range of required tasks on their own.

10. Trainees also have portfolio-building sessions and complete their own evidence reference sheets on the computer for individual elements and units of their programmes. Teaching sessions are arranged on gathering evidence for particular units and elements and this means that trainees are able to complete their portfolios themselves. They can cross-reference evidence effectively within their portfolios.

11. All level 2 trainees and approximately 5 per cent of level 1 trainees carry out internal work placements in the sister organisation in the centre. This means that they create forms and documents which can be used in the company. However, there are no current external work placements. At present, no opportunities exist for trainees to progress to level 3 or to obtain qualifications in other vocational areas.

12. Trainees complete a range of tasks, assignments, work-based scenarios and assessments as evidence towards the information-technology qualifications. Those trainees on internal work placements are able to bring evidence from their experiences there. However, there is an over-reliance on the use of simulated tasks, assignments and scenarios instead of using live evidence from the workplace, as required in some elements of the NVQ. Evidence in portfolios relates to work situations such as health and safety tasks, telephone assignments and internal memoranda between staff and trainees but not from the trainees' work placements.

13. For the contract year for 1998-99, only two trainees out of 10 achieved the information technology end user level 2 qualification: an achievement rate of 20 per cent. This was because of poor retention. In the current contract year, 66 per cent of trainees who started between April and August are still on the programme. Most of them have completed several units and are actively collecting evidence towards the remaining units of the qualification.

### **Foundation for work**

### **Grade 3**

14. The foundation for work programme, which is known locally as basic employability, is for unemployed adults who are over 25 years of age. There are 23 trainees on the programme. Prospective trainees are referred from the Employment Service or have had the programme recommended by friends or family. The programme, which lasts a minimum of 16 weeks, focuses on preparation for employment. Trainees follow a 21-hour week, flexible programme. The first four to six weeks includes a pre-NVQ information-technology skills-development programme. Following this, they can progress to NVQ level 1 information technology depending on their acquisition of skills on the pre-NVQ programme. When appropriate, trainees are offered additional information-technology qualifications that do not require portfolio-building. The basic employability

programme targets those who are disadvantaged or socially excluded and have two or more barriers, which stop them getting employment. Trainees have experienced one or more of the following: erratic employment records resulting from inappropriate behaviour; low self-esteem or poor self-presentation; a low level of literacy and/or numeracy; a continuous period of unemployment of over two years. They may also have a learning disability; a history of health problems; a disability; an offender's record, or suffer from alcohol, drug or substance abuse. There are personal development and job-search sessions, which are an integral part of the programme to help them overcome some of these barriers. Literacy and numeracy training are part of the basic employability programme. There are currently no trainees involved in development of basic skills which 5E is contracted by the TEC to provide. Inspectors agreed with the strengths and weaknesses in the self-assessment report. An additional strength and weakness were identified. The grade awarded was lower than that given by the company.

#### *STRENGTHS*

- ◆ well-planned pre-NVQ skills development programme
- ◆ excellent retention rate
- ◆ good progression onto NVQ programme and additional qualifications
- ◆ training paced to meet trainees' individual needs
- ◆ comprehensive job-search skills training

#### *WEAKNESSES*

- ◆ no basic skills training
- ◆ trainees unclear about components of the programme
- ◆ no external work placements

15. The pre-NVQ development programme is well planned and structured. Different skills and packages are worked on during each week of the six-week programme. Training is stimulating and trainees participate in it with enthusiasm. Theoretical training sessions are held each week. Trainers make good use of well-designed handouts, visual aids and demonstrations. They obtain feedback from the trainees on the effectiveness of the training sessions. Assessments are rigorous and fair. Trainees feel supported and able to relate to trainers.

16. Trainees and trainers negotiate progression targets from a list. Some targets are focused on job-search skills such as preparation of curricula vitae, letter writing, job-targeting and interview techniques. The sessions are well designed with excellent resources and real job advertisements are used to focus the sessions. Other targets relate to motivation, self-presentation and confidence-building. Sessions are run on a group basis, or one-to-one when appropriate. Although the sessions are very well run, some trainees do not recognise them as an integral part of their programme. They understand the basic employability course to be an information technology training course where they will gain a qualification, rather than being a programme which focuses on entry to employment. This is

**GOOD PRACTICE**

The following is an example of how trainers vary their methods to meet the diverse needs of the trainees. A relatively new trainee was finding it difficult to master basic skills in accessing the computer. The individual programme for this trainee was re-designed and tasks and exercises developed to repeat the same skills but in different contexts and with different contents. The trainee has gained in confidence and is making steady progress. Another trainee is able to cope with extension assignments and tasks and is being fast-tracked to NVQ level 1 information technology.

exacerbated by the fact that there are no external work placements for trainees. Trainees do not get the opportunity to use their newly acquired skills in a real working environment or to focus their job search activities towards areas in which they have had experience.

17. In this contract year, all trainees have remained on the programme and progressed onto either NVQ level 1 in information technology or an alternative qualification. Sixteen trainees who have been through the pre-NVQ training have progressed onto the information technology NVQ level 1. Of these, three trainees are now working towards the NVQ level 2. Five trainees are working towards alternative awards, which the provider offers to ensure that all trainees leave the programme with a qualification. In 1998-99, 85 per cent of trainees left the basic employability programme with one or more qualifications. These included wordpower, numberpower, and additional information-technology qualifications on offer and 18 NVQs in information technology at level 1. No trainees gained employment on leaving. The current year's contract includes basic skills and achievement of wordpower and numberpower qualifications. However, as yet there have been no trainees recruited for literacy and numeracy training. No trainee on the foundation for work programme has been identified as requiring basic skills training. A new group of trainees requiring development of their basic skills are due to start a course at the beginning of October.

**GENERIC AREAS****Equal opportunities****Grade 2**

18. 5E has a comprehensive equal opportunities policy statement and code of practice which comply with current legislation and the TEC's contractual requirements. Copies of the policy and code of practice are given to staff and trainees. In addition, there are complaints, grievance and disciplinary procedures which have not yet been tested in the workplace. These are included in the staff and trainees' handbooks. The training rooms and facilities at the centre are accessible to staff and trainees with mobility difficulties. The company's commitment to equal opportunities features in marketing material, and in its selection of staff and trainees. Equal opportunities is a fixed agenda item at the monthly senior team meetings. From the time of application, data on age, ethnicity, gender and disability are collected for prospective trainees. Twenty-four trainees (78 per cent) are from minority ethnic groups, there are 13 male trainees (39 per cent), and one trainee with a disability (3 per cent). Inspectors agreed with the strengths and weaknesses in the self-assessment report. They identified additional weaknesses. The same grade was awarded as that given by the company.

**STRENGTHS**

- ◆ ethnic mix of staff and trainees reflects that of the local community
- ◆ on-site creche at no cost to trainees
- ◆ flexible working hours to meet staff's personal circumstances



- ◆ comprehensive equal opportunities policy and code of practice
- ◆ effective promotion of equal opportunities to trainees
- ◆ good staff expertise in training disadvantaged trainees

#### *WEAKNESSES*

- ◆ selection procedures exclude some trainees with basic skills needs
- ◆ no targeting of under-represented groups in publicity material
- ◆ lack of analysis of equal opportunities data

19. The company has a good reputation in the local community for training and supporting disadvantaged people. There is a comprehensive equal opportunities policy and code of practice which has a positive influence on overall practice. The ethnic mix of staff and trainees reflects the wider community in which the provider is operating. Linguistic and cultural influences are respected, as trainees have access to staff who are more likely to understand their culture and speak their language. Staff make every effort to help trainees to overcome any obstacles which may impede their progress and hinder them from achieving success.

20. Staff have received specialist training related to equal opportunities. Recent examples include dealing with harassment, dyslexia and difficult people. All prospective trainees are interviewed and, if selected, offered a place on one of the training programmes or referred to other appropriate organisations. They are tested for the basic skills of literacy and numeracy. At present, the provider is selecting trainees with average basic skills or above to ensure that they can achieve the NVQ level 1 or 2 in information technology. Those who are illiterate, innumerate or in need of specialist ESOL (English for speakers of other languages) training are not readily accepted onto the work-based learning or basic employability programmes. As a new provider, 5E does not currently have the staff expertise to provide this type of training.

21. Staff have a wide range of expertise which is directed at addressing the various needs of disadvantaged trainees. Equal opportunity is promoted within the centre. All training agreements make reference to equal opportunities. Trainees are aware of the importance of striving for equality of opportunity. Most are able to discuss issues of harassment and discrimination on a personal level as well as in the wider context. A free on-site creche is available to parents to enable them to access the training offered by 5E. During the school holidays, trainees are given help to place their children in local play schemes and summer schools. Staff are given contracts to allow them to work hours that suit their family circumstances and educational commitments.

22. Although the equal opportunities statement is not displayed on publicity material, the 5E logo, which incorporates the words equality, education, empowerment, employment and enterprise, does appear. The promotional literature is aimed at prospective trainees wanting information technology training. It is not targeted at those people who have low literacy levels or who would benefit from basic skills training on the foundation for work programme. Statistics on

trainees' age, gender, ethnicity and disability are collected on application, at recruitment and on achievement of a qualification. These data are not methodically analysed to provide information for use during development planning. For example, trainees' applications are not monitored and analysed to provide information with regard to the profile of those who apply for, but do not enter, training.

## **Trainee support**

## **Grade 2**

23. Trainees are referred to 5E in a variety of ways; by the Employment Service, through personal recommendation, guidance services, community groups and doctors. All prospective trainees are invited to a weekly open day where they are given an assessment of their basic skills. They have individual interviews with staff, and successful trainees are invited to attend the training centre for a two-week trial period before starting their computer training. Trainees are then able to join an NVQ preparation group, together with other NVQ trainees where they gain basic computer knowledge. Trainees have an induction to the training programme during the trial period at the centre. Assessment for additional support requirements and prior learning is not recorded. Trainees are reviewed regularly. The self-assessment report was accurate in identifying most strengths and weaknesses identified during inspection. The grade awarded by inspectors is the same as that given by 5E.

### *STRENGTHS*

- ◆ well-planned and thorough induction
- ◆ good-quality and detailed reviews
- ◆ effective practical support and advice for trainees
- ◆ flexible attendance patterns

### *WEAKNESSES*

- ◆ lack of individualised targets on training plans
- ◆ no formal accreditation of prior learning
- ◆ initial assessment not used to identify additional support requirements

24. Trainees have induction in groups over a period of two days. Those who are unsure if they wish to continue with their training programme have a two-week 'taster' period during which they are able to use computers and become involved in all other aspects of the information technology training programme. Group information technology sessions are held in smaller computer rooms to enable trainees to become more familiar and confident with computer software and hardware. Trainees are issued with a comprehensive induction handbook which contains a range of information on the company, courses offered, trainees' responsibilities and health and safety issues. It also contains a detailed map of the company and how to get there by local transport, with plans of the building and introductions to the team of staff. There is a comprehensive code of conduct, equal

**GOOD PRACTICE**

*This demonstrates an innovative way of celebrating trainees achievements. Twice a year, trainees are involved in a project to organise a special luncheon for their 'High Noon Café' event. This is when trainees who have completed their qualifications are presented with certificates of achievement. Trainees work together and organise their own meetings, record minutes and set up the budget. They decide on food and drink requirements, costs of items in supermarkets, the menu, publicity, pricing and organise all the equipment and furniture required. Menus with international dishes, prices and publicity materials are then prepared on the computer and printed. Trainees also write reports on this project and produce simple profit and loss accounts to use as evidence for their training programme. Representatives from North London TEC, the Employment Service and other external agencies attend the events.*

opportunities policy and trainees' charter detailing their roles and responsibilities. Trainees also have an induction to the information technology NVQ levels 1 and 2 and are given outlines of the qualification and record sheets to collect evidence. This induction pack includes good-quality training notes and guidance for submitting reports and assignments.

25. The company monitors review dates on its in-house database. Trainees are reviewed every four to six weeks by the programme supervisor and trainer and trainees receive effective support. Trainees are asked for their opinions on their progress and are able to discuss future skills required. Targets are identified and recorded and intermediate aims to meet these are set and agreed on. Internal work placements are discussed, past achievements are reviewed and trainees are advised on relevant job-search activities, for example, for creating updated curricula vitae. More time is allowed for those trainees who need it. Trainees are also able to attend weekly drop-in sessions with tutors.

26. Reviews also take place during computer workshops and one-to-one training sessions. Trainers monitor each individual's progress on the use of computer packages and functions such as mail merge and show trainees how to back up their work and complete relevant log sheets. Trainees are given one-to-one support if required, to create reports or tasks as evidence for the information technology qualifications.

27. Trainees are given practical support in a number of ways. They have access to multilingual staff from a range of minority ethnic groups who speak a number of Asian, African and European languages. They are used when required to support trainees throughout the induction and training process. Trainees have access to personal support if they have difficulties relating to health, finance, housing and other benefits and legal matters. This sometimes includes liaising with other Employment Service staff in the area. Support given is recorded on training review forms and on personal profiles. Where appropriate, trainees who are sick and have computers at home with an e-mail package have work sent to them to keep them up to date. The company, with the financial support of the TEC, has purchased special equipment for a trainee with impaired vision who requires a screen reader magnifier. With the accompanying manual, the trainee is able to use the computer to carry out a range of functions. Support is also given to trainees who have completed their training. One-to-one support is given to past-trainees when they require familiarisation with new packages or extra practice with packages they are using in their jobs. The company also offers practical job-search training, use of the telephone and fax, use of the Internet during the day and evenings, and typing practice. Trainees are given a leaflet outlining this support, which also contains the telephone numbers of local colleges and information on when job sections will appear in national newspapers.

28. Trainees attend the training centre for 21 hours a week, but are able to negotiate individual attendance times with the company. Training rooms are open from 9.30am to 6.00pm every day, and some trainees with childcare and family commitments attend, for example, between 10.00am and 3.00pm or between 1.00pm and 6.00pm. The company also opens on Saturdays between 10.00am and

4.00pm, and all staff take turns to cover this training period. Many trainees come to the centre on Saturdays to complete information technology NVQ work, and are able to access the Internet and other e-mail packages to enhance their computer skills.

29. Training plans contain information relating to details of programmes undertaken, qualification aims and completion dates. They also contain dates of reviews, but are not individualised to record all of a trainee's support requirements. The company itself has recognised that initial assessment during induction should be used to develop individual training plans. Initial assessment is not currently used to identify support requirements. For example, there is no record of any additional support requirements for literacy or numeracy needs. This means that learning difficulties such as dyslexia are not immediately recognised. The support requirements which are recorded, are issues such as travel expenses and childcare arrangements. The company has bought the necessary information-technology equipment to support a visually impaired trainee but has not recorded these support arrangements on the training plan.

30. There are no procedures to identify the prior learning or experience of trainees. However, steps are being taken to ensure that staff train to achieve the appropriate qualifications to accredit prior learning.

### **Management of training**

### **Grade 3**

31. 5E is a relatively small organisation with four full-time staff supported by five part-time workers. There are some other key staff on full-time contracts but with shared responsibilities with the sister company. They form a close-knit team, working within a small local environment of training rooms and offices located on one floor. The programme director has overall management responsibility, reporting on a regular basis to a board of directors. A programme co-ordinator, reporting to the programme director, has day-to-day management and co-ordination responsibility for all the activities within the centre. Training is given direct to trainees by training and general support staff, guided in this role by two senior course tutors. There is a clearly defined staff structure, including senior management, senior trainers, a programme officer, operational trainers and administrative support staff. The self-assessment report identified some of the key strengths and weaknesses and was reasonably accurate. Inspectors identified more strengths and weaknesses and awarded the same grade as that given in the self-assessment report.

#### *STRENGTHS*

- ◆ management practices support effective teamwork
- ◆ flexible deployment of staff
- ◆ wide-ranging staff development
- ◆ clear target-setting for staff through well-established appraisal scheme

- ◆ effective channels of internal communication
- ◆ systematic use of trainee-related management information

*WEAKNESSES*

- ◆ inadequate planning for on- and off-the-job training
- ◆ few links between business-planning process and staff development
- ◆ underdeveloped company staffing structure
- ◆ no co-ordination of relationship with subcontractors

**GOOD PRACTICE**

*Senior management have devised an advanced database which equips them with useful data about trainees. The frequency of use of computer terminals is analysed to make decisions on timetabling and resource allocations. The use of terminals has been improved by over 56 per cent by using this system.*

32. There is a lively and vibrant atmosphere throughout the centre, with management following traditional practices of both formal and informal supervision. Both the programme director and the programme co-ordinator adopt an open-management style. Teamwork among staff in all areas is dynamic, with trainees commenting on the good team spirit that exists. Daily problems are tackled quickly, normally without the need to involve the programme director. A comprehensive staff handbook issued to all staff contains over 40 sections about the main staff policies and procedures. The focus is on management of the training and assessment to ensure consistent work standards.

33. In its first year of contracting, there have been flexible arrangements for staffing between 5E and its sister organisation, including the 'secondment' of the two senior tutors. Internal work experience is available for up to eight trainees at any one time. The trainees carry out a range of functions, and, if required, receive additional one-to-one support in computer-based training rooms. There is a common approach to 'team teaching', with trainees given a more than adequate level of attention at all times. Flexible timetabling has meant that staff work with small groups. Ratios of one-to-six are common throughout, with staff able to transfer between the two main programmes easily. Staff display an in-depth knowledge of individual trainees, and there are high attendance and retention levels. Three trainees who have not entered formal education since school days attribute the success of their current progress to the way the trainers take a genuine interest in their overall development.

34. Recruitment of staff is carried out through local advertisements, and there has been a policy to recruit appropriate past trainees wherever their skills and qualifications match the job requirements. This has resulted in the appointment of some very committed staff capable of inspiring trainees to achieve qualifications through good example. Induction to the company is thorough, with both the programme director and programme co-ordinator involved, giving an operational and course-level insight to the company's business. On appointment, all staff are issued with detailed terms and conditions of service applicable to their roles. The induction period includes a well-planned introduction to procedures. Contracts enable some staff to work in the centre while at the same time maintaining family and further education commitments.

35. Opportunities for staff development and training are readily available and are encouraged. There is a well-thought-out programme for the mentoring of new staff. Every member of staff takes part in the company's annual appraisal scheme. Both the programme co-ordinator and the programme director are involved in writing up a detailed analysis of how individuals are performing. A seven-point grading system is used to define how effective the member of staff has been. This is clear to all staff, and the process is fair and equitable. Managers invest a lot of time in this process, and staff are well informed of their targets. All staff know how their individual targets contribute to the success of broader company targets. The staff training log identifies a wide range of certificated courses which staff have attended. Some of these are with local colleges or a university. Most staff have attended specialist training provided on and off site by a preferred supplier for training the trainers. This has included training on working with trainees with learning difficulties and/or disabilities.

36. On a monthly basis, data on trainees are gathered and analysed using the in-house database. Although much of these data have been generated to meet contractual requirements, the training manager has started to extend the use to training-specific data. Where this happens, there is good dissemination of results to staff. All staff have their own security-code which enables them to view and analyse data concerning their own programme areas.

37. There has been little practical progress made with obtaining work placements. Managers have identified target areas in terms of geographical location and employer type. This includes lists of local employers which would be suitable for trainees undertaking business administration NVQs. There have not been firm arrangements to contact these employers. The recent loss of one staff member has added to the problem, but the appointment of a new job-search co-ordinator is underway. As yet, there has been no progress to co-ordinate the training provided in-house with the training which will occur during external work placements.

38. The full impact of the initial business plan has not been considered. Targets for wordpower and numberpower are set at unrealistic levels. Targets agreed on at the beginning of the contract year have not been met, and 5E has relied upon re-negotiating with the TEC when it becomes evident that the contract cannot be met. This has the effect of improving the statistics for achievement, but is based upon adjusted targets. The business-planning process is undergoing review. It does not sufficiently include staffing requirements and staff development needs. During the first year, the staffing structure is dependent on a varied set of contract and short-term secondment arrangements. The future plans for staff arrangements are not clear, and are dependent on expected contract success. There is no agreed procedure for the central co-ordination of subcontractors to provide work placements. Communication with subcontractors takes place only when necessary, and is sometimes not recorded at senior management level.

## Quality assurance

## Grade 3

39. The programme director is responsible to the board of directors for the quality assurance of all of 5E's activities. A manual is being developed which contains key policies for training, assessment and staff-related functions. The company conforms to the main contractual requirements of the TEC for quality assurance. Monthly monitoring is carried out in the centre by the TEC. During the last year, there have been eight different audits, examining various contracting and training arrangements. Two of these have been comprehensive, covering all of the centre's activities. Where recommendations for approval have been made, these have been followed and monitored in staff meetings. A framework for internal verification is set out clearly in a policy which is held by all staff. The self-assessment report identified only a couple of strengths and weaknesses. These were accurate. Inspectors judged there to be additional strengths and weaknesses and awarded the same grade as that given by 5E in the self-assessment report.

### *STRENGTHS*

- ◆ strong culture of continuous improvement
- ◆ systematic and thorough evaluation of feedback from trainees
- ◆ advanced data analysis system developed in-house
- ◆ effective consultative process with trainees to promote improvement
- ◆ accurate self-assessment report based on realistic judgements

### *WEAKNESSES*

- ◆ no overall framework for quality assurance
- ◆ some procedures not understood by all staff
- ◆ inadequate formal monitoring of training and skills acquisition
- ◆ some inaccessible key documents
- ◆ no comprehensive auditing of quality assurance

40. Managers work effectively to draw up key policies and create a climate in which staff can contribute to quality assurance measures. Some training and support staff have a steep learning curve in terms of understanding the broader concepts of quality assurance. However, they have a strong commitment to continuous improvement. A quality assurance policy has been included in the manual, and is being updated on a monthly basis by the programme director. Good progress has been made in the two areas of course design and staff development. Weekly meetings of staff include quality assurance issues. A quality assurance sub-group has been set up to discuss the development and implementation of procedures. This has been effective in improving the design of course materials and increasing the number of tutorials for all trainees.

41. Trainees' feedback about training sessions is obtained by completing questionnaires at the end of every session. These are analysed in great detail by individual trainers and the programme co-ordinator. The results are all entered into the database and distributed at staff meetings. There are several examples of the evaluations resulting in improvements to the programme. Changes to the NVQ theory sessions can be tracked in meetings and follow-up monitoring sheets. Files are kept with all the completed questionnaires in date order for each programme. Feedback from trainees is also sought midway and at the end of programmes, covering more general aspects of their satisfaction with their programmes.

42. To provide staff with relevant data about the trainees' progress and outcomes, an advanced database has been developed and is used constantly. It is most effective in providing up-to-date statistics, including progress towards NVQ achievement. Recruitment trends and referral data are available and are disseminated at monthly meetings. Staff have been provided with clear charts and diagrams which help them to discuss and agree action points. Trainees use suggestion boxes in all rooms on a regular basis. These supplement 'user group meetings', and give trainees a discreet way to make their concerns known. Two trainees noted how they had used the suggestion box to give information about room layout improvements. The addition of microwave ovens, water-coolers, window blinds and air-fans in rooms are some of the changes which have happened as a result of this consultative process.

43. All staff have been adequately involved in the self-assessment process. The managers have carefully drawn together all information from the staff, and produced an accurate self-assessment report. Most strengths and weaknesses were identified in an objective way. The co-ordinator liaises closely with staff on areas of concern, and issues raised are recorded and acted upon speedily.

44. 5E's quality assurance framework paper has not been widely distributed. Staff are unaware of its contents, and are not sure about how it applies to them. It is theoretical and has not fully been adapted to relate to practical procedures. There are many procedures which currently are unrecorded, such as the guidance given to trainees outside of the classroom. Procedures developed by management have not been adequately disseminated to staff to ensure they are all working to the same procedure and with the same level of knowledge.

45. Trainers are observed carrying out assessment for the NVQs, but this has not been extended to include observation of training. The internal verifier has developed a clear system for this, and will be implementing formal observation in the next two months, after it has been piloted. Evaluation of activities such as marketing, promotions, and recruitment has not yet been developed. Managers recognise the need to review the systems and arrangements for quality assurance, but steps have not been taken to include all staff in this process. A quality assurance review is dependent on the development of a strategic plan, but this plan is still in the process of being finalised. Documents such as the business plan and strategy documents are not easily available. Staff do not have access to updated versions of some policies and procedures although, as the centre is small, they can





usually find them without too much difficulty. Procedures for internal audits have been written, but staff are not aware yet of how these will work.