



TRAINING STANDARDS COUNCIL

INSPECTION REPORT AUGUST 1998

REINSPECTION REPORT AUGUST 1999

Burleigh College

SUMMARY

Burleigh College is a small independent training provider. At the time of the first inspection, NVQ programmes were less than satisfactory, as they did not include any work experience. The foundation for work programme was new and still being developed. Equal opportunities, trainee support and management of training were good. The organisation's quality assurance procedures were poor. Burleigh College was reinspected a year later. Work experience has been added to the NVQ programmes, and a secretarial refresher programme has also been developed. Quality assurance arrangements have been strengthened, and are now satisfactory.

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reinspection of Burleigh College, the original published report text for those areas which have been reinspected has been replaced by new text which makes reference to the original inspection findings.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

GRADES

OCCUPATIONAL AREAS	GRADE
Business administration	4
Foundation for work	3

REINSPECTION	GRADE
Business administration	3

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

REINSPECTION	GRADE
Quality assurance	3

KEY STRENGTHS

- ◆ effective staff appraisal
- ◆ good rapport between trainers and trainees
- ◆ well-motivated trainees
- ◆ good pastoral support
- ◆ close and effective monitoring of trainees' progress

KEY WEAKNESSES

- ◆ weak assessment of work-based evidence
- ◆ over use of simulated evidence in portfolios
- ◆ inadequate recording and feedback of internal verification
- ◆ low proportion of job outcomes from programmes

INTRODUCTION

1. Burleigh College is a privately owned training company. It was established in 1933 in Manchester but, for the past seven years, has offered training to unemployed adults in the west London borough of Hammersmith and Fulham. The organisation holds a contract with FOCUS Training and Enterprise Council (TEC) to provide training for unemployed adults on a work-based training programme. At the time of reinspection, there were 55 trainees, compared with 81 at the time of the original inspection. Staff numbers have remained constant at 12 (including the principals).

2. Unemployment in Hammersmith fluctuates widely within its boundary areas and averages approximately 7.5 per cent of the local population. This is above the national average rate of 4.9 per cent. The minority ethnic population spread throughout the college catchment area represents 19 per cent of total residents. The intake of minority ethnic trainees in the previous contract year was 43 per cent. The number of local school leavers achieving five or more general certificates of secondary education (GCSEs) at grade C and above in 1997 was 40 per cent, compared with the average for the Focus TEC area of 34 per cent and the national average of 53 per cent. In 1998, the national average was 46.3 per cent and local school leavers achieved 43.5 per cent.

INSPECTION FINDINGS

3. The self-assessment process which preceded the original inspection was undertaken by the proprietor of the college. The resulting report identified few strengths and weaknesses. Several of the strengths were found to be no more than normal practice, and the weaknesses identified were generally insignificant. All the grades in the report were the same. Inspectors found other strengths and weaknesses, and used a wider range of grades. Before reinspection, a short report was produced, showing progress against the action plan, and suggesting new grades. The provider was working on its second self-assessment report at the time of the reinspection.

4. Inspectors spent 10 days at Burleigh College in August 1998. Because there were no employed trainees, or trainees in work placements, inspectors spent the whole time in the training centre and interviewed 20 trainees, one ex-trainee, 10 of the 11 staff and one employer, as well as all of the senior management team. They observed four reviews and five assessments, part of an induction programme, an interview session and part of nine training sessions.

5. At the time of the reinspection in August 1999, two inspectors spent five days at the college. They observed three formal instruction sessions, and two work-based assessments. They interviewed 13 trainees, two employers, the three managers, two trainer/assessors, and the work-placement officer. They examined portfolios, work products, trainees' files, questionnaires and their analyses, internal verifier records, external verifier reports, policies, procedures, minutes of meetings and other documents.

OCCUPATIONAL AREAS

Business administration

Grade 3

6. Burleigh College has made major changes to its business administration training programme during the past year. The administration programme at NVQ level 3 has now been discontinued and the college's training in business administration is now focused on information technology at NVQ level 2 and a non-NVQ secretarial refresher programme. There are 14 trainees on the information technology programme and six on the secretarial course.

7. The weaknesses identified in the first inspection were:

- ◆ no work experience element built into the programme
- ◆ cramped accommodation
- ◆ trainees' involvement in training and assessment is restricted
- ◆ all portfolio work is simulated

8. Progress has been made with all the previously identified weaknesses in accordance with the action plan. Work experience has now become an integral part of the information technology programme and, as a result, all the portfolios include some work-based evidence. Some improvements have been made with the remaining weaknesses. The smaller number of trainees has made the accommodation less cramped, although it can still be difficult for trainers to move around the room to attend to the needs of each trainee. Trainees are more responsible for their own assessment than they were at the time of the original inspection. The provider is in the process of developing an up-to-date self-assessment report.

9. Burleigh College offers a business administration training programme for unemployed adults under a work-based learning scheme. All trainees are recruited through the Job Centre and receive a two-day induction. This includes health and safety, equal opportunities and information on the NVQ framework. The main focus of business administration training is a 15-week training scheme in information technology, with an initial period of six weeks off-the-job instruction undertaken at the training centre. This is followed by a four-week period of on-the-job training and work experience at a suitable work placement. The remaining time is spent at the training centre completing the NVQ. Trainees achieve the NVQ in information technology at level 2. Portfolio evidence is generated from the work placements and from structured assignments developed at the centre. There are five information-technology suites, with a range of software programmes. The centre has the use of a conference room for group work. The organisation also provides a secretarial course for unemployed trainees with some previous secretarial experience. The programme, which does not lead to an NVQ, includes shorthand.

10. The achievement rate has fallen slightly since the earlier inspection, when it was high, at 81 NVQs per 100 leavers. It is now 74 per 100 leavers, which reflects the fact that some trainees, including all those on the secretarial course, are not working towards an NVQ. The number of trainees gaining jobs on leaving has risen slightly since the previous year, but is still slightly lower than the year before; at 22 jobs per 100 leavers it is below the TEC local average. The length of time which trainees spend on the programme has gone down slightly from the previous years' figures, and now averages 13 weeks.

STRENGTHS

- ◆ good-quality work placements
- ◆ good planning of on-the-job learning
- ◆ high standard of off-the-job training

WEAKNESSES

- ◆ weak assessment of work-based evidence
- ◆ over-use of simulated evidence in portfolios
- ◆ trainees not involved in planning and designing portfolios

11. Burleigh College has excellent links with the small number of local employers who offer appropriate placements. Trainees are able to experience the constraints and pressures of a real work environment, and produce work to the requirements of the employers. Much of the work produced is of a very high standard, and trainees are proud of their achievements. Employers are pleased to have trainees with useful skills in information technology. The supervisors and employers are closely involved in the trainees' progress. The college communicates regularly with the employers, both through assessors' visits to the workplace, and through frequent telephone contact. Employers are thoroughly briefed on their role in the training process, and complete reports on their trainees, as well as witness statements when asked. The College produces exceptionally clear and detailed work-based learning training plans, describing the activities trainees will undertake, and the work products they will generate. The plan includes a reference to a learning agreement signed by the employer, the College, and the trainee. This training plan forms the basis for assessment plans and progress reviews. Most of the trainers in the College are working towards a training qualification. Training sessions are well-planned and taught confidently. Trainers are able to respond to questions, and to vary the plan to cope with unexpected demands from trainees. Less experienced trainers sometimes help trainees who are struggling in these sessions, and these trainers benefit from the opportunity to observe their colleagues. The software used is up to date, and the hardware is able to cope with the requirements put on it by the trainees.

12. Trainees are able to generate original and interesting evidence from their work placements. However, assessors have difficulty in assessing naturally occurring evidence, as they are insufficiently familiar with the workplace. Most trainees and their assessors view workplace evidence as extra work, to be slotted into portfolios which are already complete with college-based assignments. Assessors base their assessments on individual units of the NVQ, and do not encourage trainees to think about cross-referencing their work to other units, or about further work-based evidence which could be developed. There is no systematic method of assessing workplace evidence or for ensuring that the full range of NVQ requirements are met. There are no records of the oral questions asked, and written questions are not used. Little use is made of integrated assessments where trainees can be assessed on a complete job rather than carrying out fragmented tasks in order to meet the NVQ unit requirements. There is little use made of evidence that may be available from sources outside the college or the workplace. For college-based units, there is no opportunity for trainees to select a different 'optional' unit to meet the opportunities offered by their work placement, rather than the one which has already been selected by the college. Collection of evidence is wholly assessor-led, with hardly any direct involvement by trainees in the planning and design of their own portfolios. Trainees add their work-based evidence to their portfolios, but

some trainees have little to show, because of problems of confidentiality, or, in one case, problems with the computer and printer. Despite the addition of work experience to the programme, and the generation of at least some work-based evidence, the portfolios of most trainees are dull, with little originality and a very high proportion of standardised college-based assignments.

Foundation for work

Grade 3

13. The prevocational training programme is new to Burleigh College, with its first trainees starting in May 1998. The programme offers qualifications in information technology at NVQ level 1 and wordpower and numberpower. The programme also includes a job-search provision, as the aim is for trainees to progress to employment. There are currently 22 trainees, 20 of whom are following the information technology programme. The programme usually runs for 12 weeks, but can be extended to meet individual trainees' needs. Owing to its recent introduction, this occupational area was not included in the self-assessment report.

STRENGTHS

- ◆ motivated trainees interested in acquiring keyboard skills
- ◆ high rate of achievement at NVQ level 1
- ◆ information technology trainees' clear understanding of health & safety and data-protection issues

WEAKNESSES

- ◆ some trainees' needs not identified or met
- ◆ different components of programme not integrated
- ◆ inconsistent feedback after initial assessment

14. The trainees are highly motivated to complete the programme, as it provides them with those skills which they have identified as important in obtaining employment. The course is well structured to help trainees to gain a clear understanding of issues such as health & safety and data protection. Seventy per cent of the 13 initial starters have achieved their qualification, and two have found employment.

15. Some trainees have needs in literacy, numeracy and English for speakers of other languages (ESOL) – these have not been identified in the induction process or listed in the individual learning plan. These trainees' needs are not addressed in the programme. Some trainees are not aware their initial literacy and numeracy assessment results. The structure for individual training plans stipulated in the TEC contract allows little flexibility in the way in which trainees' particular needs can be recorded. All trainees have similar training plans – some are not aware of the specific content of their training programme. Literacy and ESOL support are

offered as a separate component and are not integrated into the computing aspect of the programme. Job-search training is also delivered separately. Training staff do not have experience or qualifications in teaching basic skills or ESOL, but this is to be addressed as part of the developments planned for this new programme.

GENERIC AREAS

Equal opportunities

Grade 2

16. Burleigh College has an up-to-date equal opportunities policy and code of practice. This incorporates a customer complaints procedure and customer care policy. Equal opportunities data are recorded on TEC audit forms which identify the gender, ethnicity, age, length of unemployment and disability of all trainees. These data are analysed each month to satisfy TEC requirements, and the company has a similar method of collecting equal opportunities data from staff application forms. The company has been invited to contribute to the equal opportunities forum run by Focus TEC and has been involved in an 'off the streets and into work' project which is intended to meet homeless people's employment needs. All mainstream employees attend a job-search guidance programme, which is run alongside their vocational programme. There is no wheelchair access to the college. Inspectors identified additional strengths and a different weakness from that highlighted in the self-assessment report.

STRENGTHS

- ◆ equal opportunities issues comprehensively addressed at induction
- ◆ good match between respective numbers of staff and trainees from minority ethnic groups
- ◆ monitoring and analysis exceeds TEC requirements
- ◆ up-to-date policy and code of practice

WEAKNESSES

- ◆ no wheelchair access to college

17. The equal opportunities policy and code of practice are comprehensive and up to date. They cover the main legislation on sex, race, disability, equal pay and rehabilitation of offenders and are reflected in staff and trainees' induction. College staff have a good awareness of equal opportunities issues and make every effort to ensure that all trainees benefit from equality of opportunity and that their diverse needs are respected and met. Trainees receive well-balanced equal opportunities information during induction, which is reinforced through the job-search guidance programme. About one half of the staff at the centre is from minority ethnic groups, compared with around 43 per cent of the trainees. The company monitors equal opportunities data in terms of gender, ethnicity and disability. The data are analysed on a quarterly and yearly basis which exceeds the

TEC's own requirements. The organisation disseminates this information to staff who are actively involved in collecting and presenting the data.

Trainee support

Grade 2

18. Individual regular support is an integral part of all programmes. The programmes are structured so that the trainees work on assignments and ask for support as and when required. Job-search advice is included in all programmes. This consists of group training and individual appointments to assist with progression to employment. Inspectors agreed with four of the strengths listed in the self-assessment report, but did not agree with the two weaknesses in the self-assessment report, finding a different weakness.

GOOD PRACTICE

The organisation continues to support some of the trainees after they leave the programme. One trainee had obtained a job, but was able to continue to work towards the qualification. A trainee on the prevocational programme was offered the opportunity to progress to NVQ level 2. The job-search provision is open to past trainees as an additional service.

STRENGTHS

- ◆ good rapport between tutors and trainees
- ◆ effective pastoral support
- ◆ availability of trained counsellors
- ◆ motivating and thorough interview and induction processes
- ◆ inclusion of job-search skills in training programme

WEAKNESSES

- ◆ superficial formal review process

GOOD PRACTICE

The trainees from the off the streets programme receive tea and biscuits. A room is allocated to Muslim trainees for prayers, and childcare support is available for single parents.

19. There is a good rapport between trainers and trainees on all programmes. Staff have empathy with adult trainees who have been unemployed for long periods. They provide a high level of individual pastoral support. Two members of staff are trained counsellors. Additional facilities are provided to meet the specific needs of trainees with disabilities.

20. The formal reviews of progress take place every six weeks and are brief. The information recorded is not detailed enough to warrant making adjustments to the trainees' training programmes. Several trainees are dissatisfied with their review and with the feedback from it; some are not aware that reviews take place.

Management of training

Grade 2

21. The organisation is managed by its two owners, who share responsibility for key functions. A general manager, tutors and assessors are accountable to one of the two partners. Lines of accountability are clear. The 1997-98 TEC contract for NVQ achievements was met and was subsequently increased. The self-assessment report listed three strengths and one weakness. Inspectors found further strengths and a weakness which had been identified in another section of the self-assessment report.

STRENGTHS

- ◆ effective staff appraisal
- ◆ clear lines of accountability
- ◆ good record-keeping
- ◆ tight control of training process and trainees' progress

WEAKNESSES

- ◆ low proportion of job outcomes from programmes

22. The organisation has a clear mission statement which is disseminated to all staff. Members of staff are aware of the business plan, and individual objectives are set in line with the plan's requirements. All staff are appraised, and, during the appraisal process, the performance of staff is assessed, against their objectives, and their training needs are identified. The staff development programme is well planned. There are clear staffing policies. Administrative procedures for staff are explained to them during induction. Record-keeping is good. The college has recently taken steps to improve its arrangements for keeping track of the destinations and progress of former trainees.

23. In the last contract year, around 20 per cent of trainees obtained jobs. This figure is well below the local TEC average of approximately 50 per cent for adult training programmes. However, performance to date in the current contract year is ahead of the target.

Quality assurance

Grade 3

24. The organisation has made significant changes to its quality assurance procedures and systems during the past year. Many of the shortcomings in the systems, which were present a year ago, have been acted upon and there is a substantial change in the organisation's approach to quality assurance. A number of quality assurance strategies, which were introduced soon after the last inspection, have now had time to mature.

25. The weaknesses identified in the first report were:

- ◆ no clearly documented quality assurance framework
- ◆ no regular mechanism for seeking views of trainees while on programme
- ◆ most staff meetings not minuted

26. Substantial progress has been made with all previously identified weaknesses in accordance with the action plan. The three weaknesses identified in the first inspection have now been eliminated. The College is in the process of developing an up-to-date self-assessment report.

27. Burleigh College has a formal quality assurance framework, which comprises a selection of policy papers together with a series of documents, which describe the training system and procedures. There is a quality assurance manual which is available to all staff and updated as necessary. The quality assurance system does not state how quality assurance procedures are managed by the organisation, which is the responsibility of one of the directors. The College meets the requirements of the TEC and of the awarding body for quality assurance. It also meets the requirements set by the TEC's financial audits.

STRENGTHS

- ◆ effective systems for continuous improvement of training
- ◆ well-structured analysis of trainees' questionnaires

WEAKNESSES

- ◆ inadequate recording and feedback of internal verification
- ◆ little control of the issue and revision of documents

GOOD PRACTICE

The trainees in the group have started a regular College newsletter, the production of which has become more ambitious and more impressive with each issue. The newsletter is used to share information about new developments throughout the College.

28. Burleigh College has established a quality assurance process in order to ensure continuous improvement both in on- and off-the-job training. There is regular monitoring of trainers' performance both by internal staff and by external consultants. Most of the teaching staff are working towards an adult teaching qualification. Occasionally, junior training staff appraise the performance of more senior colleagues. Records of such monitoring are kept and provide a valuable source of information and feedback to training staff. Good practice is effectively shared. Burleigh periodically holds awareness days for local employers, most of whom are, or are about to become, work-placement providers. Specific subjects discussed at such meetings are the content and standards of NVQs, training plans, and assessor awards. Staff meetings are now held on a regular basis and minutes are kept to ensure that good practice is shared. The College has detailed information about its trainees' achievements and destinations for the past three years, and is able to track trends and make decisions founded on comprehensive and reliable information.

29. There is a well-structured and detailed analysis of trainees' feedback, including a range of questionnaires. Formal feedback is collected through questionnaires administered mid-term and at the end of the training programme. Response rates are good and the response to each question is examined. The responses are collated and presented to the management team and staff in both tabular and diagrammatic format. In response to this feedback, the organisation has, for example, increased the number of printers available to trainees, to cut down on their waiting times. A similar survey of employers is conducted but the responses are not analysed to the same extent. A trainee focus group has been formed comprising a manager, a trainer, a local employer and four trainees. Since the focus group has been identifying possible improvements, the organisation has

responded by establishing a library for trainees, and a clothes bank for trainees needing smart dress for interviews.

30. The role of the internal verifier has been enlarged to take account of additional responsibilities, especially in relation to work-based training and assessment at placement premises. The current internal verifiers have not agreed a joint planning approach and the recording of internal verifiers' appraisal of the assessors' work is incomplete and lacks criticism. Detailed feedback is not given to the assessors and there are no formalised development plans to overcome any shortcomings. There is no ongoing internal verification in portfolios, and internal verifiers' decisions are not made clear. The College is aware of the issue, and is continuing to develop its internal verification procedures and its assessment practices. The quality assurance system provides for a control of documents. However, the recent practice of the organisation is to respond to any problematic issues by introducing new systems and documents. Some of the procedural documents overlap and there is no method of determining which documents form part of the quality assurance system and which do not. Few of the documents are dated, none are numbered, and because they have been produced quickly in response to external agencies, some of the documents have not been checked.