Twin Training International

SUMMARY

Twin Training International provides less than satisfactory training in business administration and foundation for work. Accreditation of prior learning is effective within business administration but co-ordination of on- and off-the-job training is poor and there is no system for tracking trainees' progress. The foundation for work programme provides a stimulating and well-taught programme of English language training. However, attendance and retention rates are poor and there are delays in assessment and accreditation. The equal opportunities policy is not monitored effectively. Trainees receive additional language and learning support while in training and continuing support after the completion of their training. Reviews of trainees' progress are not held regularly and are not linked to individual training plans. Trainees generally show little understanding of how their qualifications are achieved. Internal communication is good and staff development is well supported. Monitoring of training activities is poor and management information is not used to support planning. There is no formal framework for quality assurance and quality assurance arrangements are unsatisfactory.

GRADES

OCCUPATIONAL AREAS	GRADE
Business administration	4
Foundation for work	4

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

KEY STRENGTHS

♦ flexible English language training
♦ new initiatives in equal opportunities
♦ comprehensive grievance and discipline procedure
♦ strong lines of internal communication

KEY WEAKNESSES

♦ no assessment of information technology trainees
♦ no co-ordination of on- and off-the-job training
♦ weak staff policies and procedures
♦ ineffective reviews
♦ little influence of initial assessment in individual training plans
♦ lack of business planning
♦ poor monitoring of trainees' reviews, assessment and progress
♦ inadequate quality assurance arrangements

INTRODUCTION

1. Twin Training International is a privately owned company based in Lewisham, south east London. Strategic planning and overall management are the responsibility of a board of three executive directors and one non-executive director who meet monthly. The company was established in 1995 to provide travel and tourism services for European student groups. In June 1998 the company broadened the scope of its activities, setting up a training centre as a language school for private overseas students. In 1999 the company expanded the training centre further to provide national vocational qualifications (NVQ) and programmes of English for speakers of other languages (ESOL) to residents from the local community.

2. The company manages and provides work-based training programmes for adults and young people through contracts with South London Training and Enterprise Council (SOLOTEC). Twin Training also contracts with two local further education colleges to provide training for New Deal clients registered on the full-time education and training option. Programmes are offered within the occupational areas of business administration and foundation for work. All off-the-job training is provided at the company's training centre in Lewisham. At the time of the inspection 11 young people and 93 adults were in receipt of government funded work based training. Of these, 77 adults were following a foundation for work programme, including 13 adults registered as New Deal clients. Thirteen adults were working towards an NVQ in information technology at level 2, three adults were working towards an NVQ at level 2 in business administration, two of these were also taking information technology at level 2. All the 11 young people are national trainees and are working towards NVQs in information technology at level 2.

3. Twin Training employs a team of four full-time staff who are each responsible for managing different aspects of the training centre's operation. Overall management is the responsibility of one of the company directors who reports regularly to the board of directors. In addition to the full-time staff, the company employs six trainers on short-term contracts. Placement officers based within the company's internship department work with training centre staff to identify appropriate work placements.

4. Reflecting national trends, there is a clear overall shift in emphasis in the economy of south London towards service based industries. The public services sector is south London's largest employer. The business service sector continues to expand, while employment in manufacturing continues to decline. Although unemployment in south London halved in the five years between 1993 and 1998, the unemployment rate remains high compared with that nationally. Unemployment rates in the boroughs vary considerably, from 8.9 per cent in Lewisham and 8.6 per cent in Greenwich to 3.2 per cent in Bromley. The economy of south London is heavily dependent on small employers. Trends indicate that employment opportunities in future will be in occupations which require good

educational qualifications and higher level training. People from minority ethnic communities accounted for 11.8 per cent of the population in south London at the last census in 1991. The minority ethnic population varies greatly according to borough, accounting for 22 per cent of the population in Lewisham, 12.7 per cent in Greenwich and 4.7 per cent in Bromley.

5. In 1998, the percentage of school leavers achieving five or more general certificates of secondary education (GCSEs) at grade C and above was 44.4 per cent across south London, compared with the national average of 46.3 per cent. In Greenwich and Lewisham the achievement rate was 33 per cent, well below the national average.

INSPECTION FINDINGS

6. Twin Training International completed its first self-assessment report for work-based training in March 2000. This was updated in May 2000 and a supplementary action plan was drawn up to address the issues raised in that report. The process of self-assessment began in February 2000 and was co-ordinated by the director of studies. The company was assisted by SOLOTEC which provided advice on the process of self-assessment and continuous improvement. All staff were involved in the self-assessment process, collecting evidence of current policies and procedures for the occupational areas in which they worked, commenting on drafts of the report and contributing to the grading decisions. Trainees' views on the quality of their training were obtained through structured group discussions using a questionnaire. The company was not accurate in evaluating the provision it offers. Many of the weaknesses were not identified in the report, and inspectors awarded lower grades for all areas, apart from quality assurance, where the inspection team agreed with the grade given by the company.

7. A team of three inspectors spent a total of 12 days at Twin Training in May 2000. They inspected business administration and foundation for work. Information technology was inspected as part of business administration. Inspectors visited four employers and observed 11 training, assessment and guidance activities. They interviewed 44 trainees and 12 staff, and examined a range of documents, including 12 trainees' portfolios and 50 trainees' files, together with assessment and review documents and internal and external verifiers' reports. Policies and procedures, marketing information, TEC contracts and performance data were also examined. 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		2				2
Foundation for work			5	2	1	8
Total		**2**	**5**	**2**	**1**	**10**

OCCUPATIONAL AREAS

Business administration   Grade 4

8. The company introduced training in business administration and information technology in August 1999. Twin Training currently has 27 trainees following government-funded programmes in this occupational area. There are 24 trainees on programmes leading to the using information technology NVQ at level 2. Eleven of these are national trainees, 13 are adult trainees on a work based learning for

adults programme. Three adult trainees are working towards a business administration NVQ at level 2. This is no longer being offered to new recruits to Twin Training. Two of the business administration trainees are also working towards an information technology NVQ at level 2. Training takes place at the company's premises in Lewisham for the first eight to 10 weeks. This can be extended if trainees need longer to achieve competence. This in-house training is organised as three stages, with the third stage extending until the trainee is ready to go on placement. Stage one, an introductory module, includes an induction programme and an introduction to using a computer. In-house training is provided mainly through a series of self-help training packs supplemented by training sessions. There are no timetabled job search sessions for adult trainees but they are expected to show evidence of one job search a week. Placements are arranged either by the trainees themselves or by the placement co-ordinator. There were eight trainees on placement at the time of inspection, four national trainees and four adults. Trainees on placement come into the centre one day each week for a minimum of two hours. Trainees remain on placement for at least three months during which time they receive review visits from the placement co-ordinator. Of the 27 national trainees enrolled on business administration programmes in 1999-2000, 59 per cent left without a qualification, 33 per cent achieved an NVQ and one was asked to leave the programme. Over the same period, 56 per cent of adult trainees achieved an NVQ. The proportion of all trainees securing employment at the end of their training was 35 per cent. The self-assessment report identified a number of strengths which inspectors considered to be no more than normal practice. Further strengths and weaknesses were identified during inspection. Inspectors awarded a lower grade than that given by the company in its self-assessment report.

STRENGTHS

♦ effective accreditation of prior learning

♦ good motivation of trainees by project work

WEAKNESSES

♦ no assessment of trainees in information technology

♦ no co-ordination of on- and off-the-job training

♦ no tracking of trainees' progress towards the NVQ

♦ most training poorly structured

9. Trainees are assessed and interviewed before starting their programme. Those who have previous qualifications or who prove their competence are fast tracked through the introductory module to the next stage of the training programme. The acknowledgement of existing competence motivates trainees, ensures that prior experience is taken into consideration in their training plan and prevents the unnecessary repetition of work. It also enables competent trainees to go on placement quickly.

10. Projects, which are designed to enable trainees to improve their skills, also motivate them to develop and demonstrate competence through a range of activities which address several elements of their qualification. Projects include researching the price of computers and identifying hazards in the workplace. Projects involve research and the presentation of findings to the group. Trainers draw on the presentations to introduce important points and to generate discussion. The reports trainees produce following their presentations involve using word processing skills, graphs, charts and clip art. Project work has also motivated trainees to use additional software packages such as Powerpoint to present their findings in a more professional manner.

11. Information technology trainees are visited in the workplace but are not assessed. They are visited by the placement officer who checks attendance and progress with both the employer and the trainee. A trainer, who has not achieved an assessor's award, also visits and comments on trainees' work but is unable to assess. The training undertaken at the centre has not been assessed either. Trainees' work is not sampled on a regular basis and verification of portfolios is not carried out progressively but takes place at the end of the programme. The recently appointed internal verifier has accurately identified shortcomings in existing practice, is introducing an assessment strategy and has arranged a series of staff development days to address these issues. However, at the time of the inspection, the new systems had not been applied to all trainees and assessment arrangements for the majority of current trainees were inadequate.

12. Some employers are not fully aware of the NVQ's content and structure and are not involved in the training process, although they are supportive of their trainees and are willing to help. There is no co-ordination of activities occurring at work and those undertaken at the training centre and, in many instances, employers are not aware of the training trainees have during day release sessions. Employers are not systematically involved in the review process and the opportunity to involve them in discussions of trainees' progress and in identifying training requirements is missed. There is no work-based assessment by employers and supervisors are not involved in the assessment process other than by signing witness statements and testimonials. Many employers and trainees are unaware of the importance of gathering naturally occurring evidence in the workplace. Trainees miss opportunities to gather evidence of their acquisition of competencies and some make slow progress.

13. There is no uniform system for tracking trainees' progress. Although a new tracking system is in the process of being developed, it has yet to be introduced. There is no systematic target setting and action planning process for trainees. Trainees are given copies of the new information technology standards but they are not clear about the content of the NVQ programme, the assessment methods and what they have to do to achieve success. Trainees do not have clear short term goals for completing units of the NVQ and do not know how far they have progressed towards completing the qualification. These trainees are frustrated by their lack of progress and are concerned that they will not complete the qualification before the end of their training.

14. Off-the-job training consists mainly of open learning sessions, with little structured teaching, apart from that involved in two projects undertaken by trainees. The training programmes run at the centre are not supported by a structured training plan which clearly defines what trainees can aim to achieve at different stages. Trainees do not know what to expect next as structured training is not timetabled in advance but is arranged on an ad hoc basis and trainees do not know when it will take place. There is an over reliance on open learning packages. Trainees can access a number of word processing training packs, which include a section on self-assessment. However, many trainees are unfamiliar with computers and the packs do not provide adequate instruction or support.

Foundation for work   Grade 4

15. Twin Training provides prevocational training for adults whose first language is not English. There are 77 government-funded trainees in this occupational area, all of whom are following an English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) programme. Thirteen clients are on a New Deal programme following the full time education and training option and 64 are on basic employability programmes. The New Deal clients are sub-contracted through two local colleges. There are 10 trainees studying for a basic or intermediate ESOL qualification, 45 are working towards entry level qualifications in wordpower and numberpower and 26 are working towards level 1 in wordpower and numberpower. Trainees attend the centre for a maximum period of 28 weeks. The average length of stay is 14 weeks. Work placements are not a regular part of the programme and are not a requirement of the contract. One trainee was on placement at the time of inspection. Training is mainly classroom based, with some individual study in the form of homework. The staff providing foundation for work training are responsible for training, assessment and reviews. They are working towards the vocational assessor award or are due to start this training shortly. Time is allocated for each trainer to have a short one-to-one meeting with each trainee on a fortnightly basis. The self-assessment report identified 16 strengths, three of which were confirmed by inspectors. Five weaknesses were identified by the company and one was confirmed by inspectors. Inspectors identified additional weaknesses and awarded a lower grade than the one given in the self-assessment report.

STRENGTHS

♦ specialist expertise of staff

♦ flexibility for trainees to move between levels

WEAKNESSES

♦ lack of focus on individuals' needs

♦ delays in assessment and accreditation

♦ poor attendance and retention rates

♦ no continuity in training

♦ unstructured job search

16. Staff involved in co-ordinating and managing the language programmes all have direct experience of ESOL teaching and hold relevant qualifications. Training staff have a range of additional specialist qualifications and experience. One has a qualification in counselling skills for the development of learning and several have experience of working with refugees in a range of settings, including the voluntary sector. Several trainers specialised in basic skills or ESOL as part of a wider teaching degree. Trainers have an in-depth understanding of the language development needs of their trainees.

17. The training centre runs six language groups which are working at four different levels. This gives scope for trainees to be allocated to a group which accurately matches their level of English. Trainers effectively identify trainees who are either struggling with the language requirements of their group or not being sufficiently stretched and arrange, in consultation with the trainee, for them to be allocated to a more suitable group. Managers are responsive to these requests and the range of groups available enables these adjustments to be made quickly.

18. Trainers work hard to make sessions lively and to involve the whole group. They use whole group teaching, paired activities and small group work. Sessions are generally well structured and most sustain the trainees' interest. However, the focus of the programmes is on the teaching of the syllabus rather than the individual needs of trainees. The milestones, which provide the short-term goals for trainees on basic employability programmes, are not individualised. Common milestones, such as 'improve communication skills' and 'improve job search skills', are too imprecise to enable progress to be measured by trainers and trainees. Tutors and trainees are not aware of individual training plans or the milestones they contain. Milestones are not, therefore, discussed or reviewed regularly during the fortnightly review meetings. Portfolios do not adequately reflect the individual experiences and aspirations of trainees. They mainly contain standard worksheets which the whole group has completed.

19. Trainees working towards basic skills qualifications are experiencing delays in assessment and accreditation. Twin Training has recently reviewed the qualifications its offers to ESOL trainees and has taken on new staff. New assessment practices are emerging, but are not yet established. At the time of the inspection, no assessment was taking place in wordpower or numberpower. None of the trainers has an assessor's award. Plans have been made to undertake an intensive period of assessment. This will be carried out by three staff who are working towards their vocational assessor award, under the guidance of the new internal verifier. However, if these plans are not put into effect, trainees near the end of their programme could be seriously disadvantaged. The trainees in the intermediate level group have had no information on how they will be assessed.

20. Attendance and retention rates are poor. Twin Training has recognised poor attendance as a problem. Trainees now have to sign in and trainers keep registers. However, there is, as yet, little indication that the problem has been solved. Attendance registers were examined for a recent sample period. These showed that 42 per cent of trainees missed two days or more in any one week. During the

inspection itself, classes observed had an average of one third of trainees absent. Comprehensive data on achievement are not yet available as the programmes are relatively new. However, since August 1999 17 trainees have successfully completed their programmes and gained a qualification, and 27 trainees left early with no qualifications. Job outcomes are running at 78 per cent below target. Training staff are unaware of achievement targets or current performance against these.

21. Trainees complain of the lack of continuity of their programmes. In particular, they are concerned about frequent changes of staff. This disrupts progress and hampers the review process. On average, trainees interviewed during inspection experienced a different tutor for each month they had been on the programme. Trainees' insecurity is exacerbated by the lack of an overall training plan which describes the content of each course.

22. There is no structured job search programme covering different aspects of preparation for employment. There are no group sessions on job search topics, such as personal presentation and interview skills, which would give trainees an understanding of the skills they need to secure employment and opportunities to develop those skills. Job search is timetabled to take place one half day each fortnight. It is left to trainees to decide how to use this time. Most trainees do not have sufficient skills to be effective in job search and are unfamiliar with employment practices in this country. Some job search skills, such as letter and curriculum vitae writing are covered during English tuition, but these activities may not take place at an appropriate time, such as when a trainee is applying for a job. The job search activities which take place during language classes are not co-ordinated with the job search support provided by the placement co-ordinator.

GENERIC AREAS

Equal opportunities   Grade 4

23. Twin Training is located in an area with a wide diversity of ethnic groups and nationalities, including refugees. As a training company specialising in English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL), they receive many referrals of people with English language needs. As a result, 63 per cent of trainees are from minority ethnic groups. They receive more referrals of men than women, leading to a gender imbalance of 75 per cent men and 25 per cent women. The marketing of programmes is limited, as most of the company's trainees are referred by Employment Services. However, they do hold open days when newly referred trainees can find out more about the company and its programmes. Ten per cent of trainees are classed as having disabilities, based on information from the Employment Service. The training centre is inaccessible to wheelchair users and difficult to reach for anyone with impaired mobility, as the main rooms are on the first floor and the lavatories are on the second floor. Twin Training has an equal opportunities policy which meets contractual requirements. It is displayed in the

training centre and distributed to trainees in the trainees' handbook. Data are collected on the ethnic origin of trainees, on their gender and disability, in line with the TEC's and awarding body's requirements. The self-assessment report did not accurately identify strengths and weaknesses in this area. The report identified six strengths and two weaknesses. Only one of these was confirmed by inspection and is incorporated in the report. Inspectors identified additional weaknesses and awarded a lower grade that than given in the self-assessment report.

STRENGTHS

♦ good integration of all trainees

♦ new initiatives in equal opportunities

WEAKNESSES

♦ little understanding of the equal opportunities policy by staff and trainees

♦ poor monitoring of the effectiveness of the policy

♦ poor promotion of equal opportunities to employers and potential trainees

24. Staff create a relaxed, welcoming atmosphere in the training centre while making it clear that harassment and discrimination will not be tolerated. This enables people of many different nationalities to mix together successfully. Trainers integrate trainees in the classroom by using group and paired work as a way of encouraging different nationalities to work together. Although women are heavily outnumbered by men, staff try to ensure that women are not marginalised. Inspectors witnessed a number of instances where women trainees were given extra support and encouragement.

25. A trainees' handbook has recently been developed and issued to trainees. This covers equal opportunities, including the complaints procedure. The complaints procedure is being actively promoted. Information for trainees about their rights and responsibilities has been translated into eight languages, including Tamil and Vietnamese. There have been recent appointments of staff from minority ethnic groups. It is too soon to judge how these new initiatives will impact on trainees. However, they demonstrate the company's commitment to equal opportunities.

26. Staff and trainees have little understanding of the equal opportunities policy. There is no training in equal opportunities for either staff or trainees. Trainees have little or no recollection of any equal opportunities issues being covered in induction. Staff have a personal commitment to equal opportunities and know how they, personally, are trying to put this into action, but they have little understanding of what the organisation's policy is and what the implications of the policy might be. Three different versions of the company's equal opportunities policy statement are currently in circulation: two different versions are on the walls of the training centre and a third version is in the staff handbook. The differences between the statements are significant and this is an additional source of confusion.

27. The company collects basic data to develop a profile of its trainees, to meet the TEC's and awarding body's requirements. These data are not methodically analysed to provide information which would enable the company to monitor the effectiveness of its equal opportunities policy and to plan future action to address equal opportunities issues.

28. Placements are not monitored to ensure that they meet the company's equal opportunities standards. Employers are not informed about the company's policy and its implications for trainees on placement. Marketing materials do not promote the equal opportunities message to trainees or employers, with the exception of one recent press advertisement. The open days arranged for potential trainees do not feature information about Twin Training's commitment to equal opportunities.

Trainee support   Grade 4

29. Most trainees are referred to Twin Training by Employment Services and all attend an open day before they join. During this day trainees are given an outline of the training programme and undertake standardised English and maths tests. When they join the programme, ESOL trainees take an additional test, designed by Twin Training, which assesses their linguistic competence. Trainees following an information technology programme also take a word processing exercise, which is designed to test their competence on the keyboard and identify the level of support they require. Induction occurs in two stages. The first stage is a general session on health and safety, equal opportunities, the complaints procedure and the NVQ process. All trainees receive a handbook which contains the company's policies and procedures and information about the training programmes. The second stage is occupationally specific and is undertaken within the occupational area. The induction process lasts a day. The company liaises regularly with the careers office and local job centres and has links with the local Turkish centre. Foundation for work trainees are reviewed once a fortnight while they are receiving training full-time at the centre. The placement officer helps trainees with their job search activities and also deals with pastoral care issues such as housing, immigration and financial concerns. The self-assessment report identified eight strengths, two of which were confirmed during inspection. Inspectors agreed with the weaknesses identified in the self-assessment report. They identified further weaknesses and awarded a lower grade than that given by the company in its self-assessment report.

STRENGTHS

♦ comprehensive grievance and discipline procedures
♦ extra support for trainees with English language needs
♦ good opportunities for job search after completion of the programme

WEAKNESSES

♦ irregular and ineffective reviews

♦ poor understanding of programmes by trainees

♦ little account taken of initial assessment

GOOD PRACTICE
The café provides opportunities for all nationalities to interact in a relaxed environment. The café occupies the whole of the upper part of the building. Free tea and coffee are provided. The café is a popular social facility which acts as a meeting place for trainees from all cultures.

30. There is a comprehensive discipline and grievance procedure which is set out in the trainees' handbook. This outlines the system of verbal warnings, written warnings and final written warnings before dismissal. There are clear timescales for each stage, with an explanation of the appeals procedure. There is a detailed section on gross misconduct, which gives a description with examples. The trainees' handbook is clear and comprehensive and also gives details of attendance, holiday entitlement, course work requirements and placement arrangements. There is a useful question and answer section at the back.

31. Trainees for whom English is a second language receive extra help. The company uses its specialised facilities and training expertise to include trainees in the company's private language classes. This is in addition to trainees' timetabled language programmes and continues until their skills reach a level where such additional support is no longer necessary. Twin Training also provides help for trainees who need additional learning support. Currently, a small group of four trainees receives two hours' extra basic literacy each week to enable them to improve their skills. Some foundation for work trainees have extra training in information technology in addition to their basic skills training.

32. Trainees who complete their programme and leave without finding employment are able to come back to the centre for up to 12 weeks to use the centre's facilities. This includes the use of computers and open learning packages, advice and help in job search activities and use of the telephone.

33. Progress review meetings are scheduled to take place at regular intervals. In many instances, these meetings do not happen within the scheduled timescale. For example, the files of 11 out of 13 trainees following the information technology NVQ were found to contain no record of any reviews. The New Deal clients receiving training with the company have not been reviewed in line with the guidance for the full-time education and training option. The failure to hold review meetings on a regular basis makes it difficult to identify and address promptly any concerns and queries trainees may have. The reviews which are carried out do not consistently include the setting and monitoring of short term, achievable targets. Most reviews last between 10 and 15 minutes and the areas which are covered are not always dealt with in sufficient depth. Staff who undertake reviews within the foundation for work programme are not familiar with trainees' individual training plans. Discussion is based solely on the trainees' portfolios and does not include a review of progress towards the achievement of milestones and completion of the training plan. Opportunities are missed to further the trainees' development by setting goals, reviewing their progress towards reaching them and agreeing firm action plans for the improvement of trainees' performance.

34. Trainees do not understand the structure and content of their qualification or the requirements of the assessment process. Trainees working towards wordpower and numberpower qualifications are not clear that these are competence-based qualifications which are assessed on the basis of a portfolio, rather than by examination. Some trainees in work placements are not aware of the need to collect evidence at work or of the forms of evidence that are acceptable to the awarding body. For example, two trainees following the information technology NVQ programme did not know they had to keep a diary of evidence. Another trainee who has been working towards the NVQ for a number of months has not cross-referenced any of the evidence in the portfolio because he does not understand how to. This lack of understanding has meant that many trainees on work placement have fallen behind in their NVQ work and are concerned that they will not complete the qualification before the end of the programme.

35. Although trainees undertake a number of initial assessment tests, which are kept in trainees' personal files, these do not affect individual training plans. Staff responsible for teaching and progress reviews are not aware of the results of initial assessment tests. They do not, therefore, use this information when planning trainees' programmes, discussing progress or agreeing an action plan. This has led, in some cases, to trainees being placed inappropriately on programmes leading to qualifications which the results of their initial assessment indicate are at too low a level. Training plans contain little or no information about trainees' identified additional learning support needs or any extra help they may be receiving.

Management of training   Grade 4

36. Twin Training International is a small company which was first established in 1995. The company is managed by one non-executive director and three executive directors. The executive directors each take responsibility for different divisions within the company. The training centre, which provides work-based training programmes, employs a team of four full-time staff. It was restructured in December 1999, and is now run by one of the executive directors who acts as managing director. The managing director has overall management responsibility, reporting on a regular basis to a board of directors. The director of studies has management and co-ordination responsibility for staff, training resources and quality assurance. A head of work-based learning for adults is responsible for recruitment, trainee support, the administration of government-funded contracts, liaison with contracting organisations and the collection and analysis of management information. A head of jobs and placements is responsible for liaising with trainees and companies, providing careers guidance, arranging work placements and monitoring and supporting trainees on placements. The director and director of studies are supported by a full-time administrative assistant who is responsible for setting up and monitoring data and administrative procedures, including attendance, achievements, job centre referrals and job outcomes. The company also employs a freelance internal verifier, four ESOL trainers and two information technology trainers on temporary hourly paid contracts. All the

training at the centre is undertaken by hourly paid staff who are employed for between 15 and 26 hours a week. The self-assessment report identified strengths which inspectors considered to be no more than normal practice. Two strengths were confirmed by inspectors who identified an additional strength. Inspectors identified several weaknesses which the provider had failed to recognise, and awarded a lower grade than that given by the company.

STRENGTHS

♦ open and consultative management

♦ weekly staff meetings

♦ frequent feedback to trainers

WEAKNESSES

♦ lack of business planning

♦ weak staff policies and procedures

♦ poor monitoring of trainees' reviews, assessment and progress

♦ insufficient analysis of management information

37. Twin Training is managed in an open and consultative way. Managers are accessible and approachable to staff and trainees. Staff are encouraged to contribute ideas and share opinions with managers. There is regular, unrecorded contact between staff which supports planning and co-ordination. Occupational area staff teams meet weekly to discuss operational issues, receive information and plan training. Meetings enable staff to discuss curriculum issues, the progress of individual trainees and to identify staff development needs. They provide regular support for new members of staff.

38. The director of studies regularly observes staff teaching. Observations are conducted according to clear criteria with which staff are familiar. Detailed, constructive feedback on performance is provided to each member of staff who is observed. Their views are also obtained. The director of studies plans professional development activities on the basis of needs identified through observation. Feedback does not, however, result in individual action plans to address identified weaknesses and support improvement.

39. Management is characterised by a lack of business planning. There is no clear, strategic vision for the section of the company which provides government-funded training. No overall targets, priorities or success indicators have been established to guide decision making or to support evaluation. The lack of a business plan inhibits forward planning to meet the changing needs of the centre's client groups, expansion in numbers, the introduction of new qualifications and changes in awarding body requirements, for instance the introduction of the new information technology standards. The absence of agreed priorities leads to delays in decision making. Managers work energetically to address problems as they arise. However, these strategies are not generally recorded and are not part of a longer term

planning process with clear timescales and procedures for evaluation.

40. Staff policies and procedures are under-developed. There is no formal staff recruitment policy. The staff appraisal system lacks rigour and has not been applied consistently across the company. Appraisal of full-time staff does not include the agreement of a personal development plan, with measurable targets and an action plan. There is no regular appraisal of hourly paid staff. Use is made of external courses and Twin Training has developed in-house training for assessors and trainers. Staff are encouraged to identify training needs and opportunities but there is no comprehensive programme to encourage all staff to participate in training and development. Some staff do not have job descriptions. Some job descriptions do not reflect current responsibilities and some have not been updated as agreed in performance reviews.

41. There is no systematic auditing of procedures for trainees' reviews and assessments to ensure that procedures are being followed consistently and in accordance with TEC contract and awarding body requirements. There is no regular monitoring of trainees' progress to check progress towards the attainment of targets and qualifications. Many trainees are not receiving reviews at appropriate times and this has not been identified by managers. Management information about trainees is used to monitor business performance against TEC contracts. Managers are aware of the need for better information. However, at the moment information is not analysed and used for action planning to improve training. Equal opportunities data are not monitored or analysed. Additional information, such as that on trainees who leave early and attendance records, has not been analysed to identify trends and support improvements.

Quality assurance   Grade 4

42. The director of studies is responsible to the managing director for the quality assurance of the training centre's activities. Quality assurance systems are focused mainly on achieving contractual compliance and data gathered are used as a means of comparing the company's performance against the contract. Observations of training are used informally as a performance indicator. The company has begun to formulate written policies which cover some aspects of its training activities and the operation of the company. Many procedures for quality assurance are not yet clearly recorded. The self-assessment report identified three strengths for this aspect of training, one of which inspectors confirmed, one was considered by inspectors to be no more than normal practice and one was reported under the management of training. Inspectors agreed with the weaknesses identified in the self-assessment report and identified additional weaknesses and a further strength. The grade awarded is the same as that given by the company in the self-assessment report.

STRENGTHS
♦ good staff commitment to continuous quality improvement

♦ problems addressed as a result of self assessment

WEAKNESSES

♦ no overall quality assurance framework
♦ no systematic evaluation of policies and procedures
♦ poor internal verification procedures

43. Twin Training staff have a strong commitment to the continuous improvement in the quality of training and managers recognise that quality assurance procedures need to be integrated into the management of training as a whole. Training staff are committed to evaluating their own performance in order to improve the quality of the training they provide. The company has a positive attitude to monitoring by outside bodies and has sought advice from its external verifier and the staff at SOLOTEC. The company has taken action to address problems where improvements need to be made. For example, the newly appointed internal verifier is producing a comprehensive set of written procedures and developing an assessment strategy which is now being introduced.

44. There is no comprehensive framework for quality assurance. Few written policies and procedures have been introduced and these do not yet form part of a systematic approach to assuring quality. Some procedures developed by management have not been adequately disseminated to staff to ensure that all understand and are working to the same procedure. Some new procedures, such as the arrangements to collect feedback from trainees are, as yet, untested. The company has comprehensive complaints, grievance and disciplinary procedures for staff and trainees. There are, however, no written procedures for the recruitment of trainees for their initial assessment, for their individual training plans and reviews. There is, therefore, no means of ensuring that there is a consistent level of quality across important aspects of the company's operation. The collection of data is not used to evaluate the company's performance or to set targets for improvement.

45. There is no regular internal auditing or evaluation of policies and procedures. Different versions of policies are in circulation and documents are often undated. There is no quality control of training and assessment documents which are used by trainers to ensure that they meet consistent standards. There is some good practice in teaching and learning at Twin Training but good practice is not shared. There is no systematic evaluation of feedback from staff, trainees and employers and there is no systematic way of establishing their views of the quality of the training provided or where improvements can be made. An end of programme questionnaire has recently been introduced to gather feedback from trainees but these have not yet been analysed.

46. The company recognises that its internal verification arrangements have been inadequate. There were no internal verification documents prior to April 2000 and no strategy for the co-ordination of assessment. Assessors have used incorrect documents and trainee assessors have not been supported. These weaknesses are

now being addressed. A strategy has been agreed, improved procedures are beginning to be used and monthly meetings have been introduced by the internal verifier to support the team of assessors. However, the legacy of the previous poor internal verification system continues to have an impact by causing delays in assessment and the trainees' slow progress towards the achievement of their qualifications.

47. All staff have been involved in the self-assessment process and are aware of the report. Twin Training used the inspection process to identify actions which it can take to improve the effectiveness of its quality assurance systems and, through this, the quality of the services provided to trainees. The self-assessment in preparation for inspection was the company's first attempt to focus on and establish continuous improvement in the quality of training. An action plan to address weaknesses identified by self-assessment accompanies each section of the report. However, this does not consistently identify staff responsibilities and does not identify target dates for the implementation of action, milestones or measurable performance indicators. Apart from quality assurance, where inspectors agreed with the grades given by the company, all other aspects of training received lower grades than those given in the self-assessment report. In many cases, strengths identified by the company were considered by inspectors to be no more than normal practice, while weaknesses were not identified by the company. The company has, however, been positive in its approach to self-assessment and inspection. Some action has been taken and improvement in procedures has resulted.